

CPABC ORIENTATION GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL LEARNERS RESIDING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

CPA PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (CPA PEP)

Updated on April 8, 2025



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About the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (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 Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA)



Chartered Professional Accountants (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 (education and examination) 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 need to know as an international learner wishing to pursue the CPA designation in British Columbia. For your convenience, the guide has been segmented based on where you are in your learning journey towards becoming a CPA.

1

**BEFORE
APPLYING TO CPA
PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATION
PROGRAM**

1. Before applying to the CPA Professional Education Program

a. *How do I become a CPA in British Columbia?*

Visit the CPABC website for information on [Becoming a CPA in British Columbia](#).

b. *Who administers the CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) on behalf of CPABC?*

[CPA Western School of Business \(CPAWSB\)](#) has been contracted to administer the education and examination components of CPA PEP.

c. *General Information about CPA PEP*

- I. [CPA PEP Overview](#)
- II. [CPA preparatory courses Overview](#)
- III. [CPA Practical Experience Requirements \(CPA PER\) Overview](#)
- IV. [CPA Glossary of commonly used terms for getting started](#)

d. *Does CPABC use international education agents?*

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

e. *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 [CPA 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 (including 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.

Both CPABC and 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.

f. *What are the entrance requirements to enroll in the CPA PEP?*

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

- I. [Degree holder](#)
- II. [Internationally Designated Accountant](#)
- III. [Mature Entrants](#)

g. *Do I need to reside in Canada to get the CPA designation?*

Yes, as a learner, you must [register in the province or territory](#) in which you permanently live and work. To enroll with CPAWSB and study for the CPA designation, you must live in Western Canada (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut).

h. Do I need to hold a study permit to start the program?

Before admission, all applicants must provide documentation that demonstrates their eligibility to study in Canada at a Designated Learning Institution (DLI) based on IRCC's current policies. Once deemed eligible to study for the CPA designation, CPAWSB can provide you with an Appendix to support your study permit application. A Provincial Attestation Letter (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.

i. How much does it cost to live in BC?

I. Living costs

Living costs vary depending on whether you choose to live in a large city or a 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](#).

II. 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
- [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.

j. Will I be able to find suitable accommodation once I arrive in Canada? Does CPA provide accommodation?

CPA does not provide accommodation for learners. Applicants must secure their own suitable accommodation while pursuing their studies. For more information regarding housing, [refer to the 'Finding a place to live' section in The BC Newcomers' Guide](#).

k. What are the steps to apply for CPA PEP?

- I. To enroll with CPAWSB, [determine your applicant type](#) and bookmark the page and follow the steps outlined on the page. Generally, the steps are:
 - a. Create a profile on [My CPA Portal](#)
 - b. Request a transcript assessment
 - c. Submit a CPA PEP admission application and pay fees once the assessment shows the status of PEP Eligible or PEP Conditional Core 1 (read the results for your next steps)
- II. Once your CPA PEP admission application is approved, you can register for your first CPA PEP module from your My CPA portal.

l. 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. Visit the CPAWSB website for [an overview of the program costs and fees](#), and a breakdown of the \$14,000 cost.

m. What are your refund policies?

CPAWSB's initial registration fee and annual student dues are non-refundable. Module fees are subject to a penalty based on the date of withdrawal. See the [CPA PEP Fees webpage](#) for a breakdown of penalties and timelines.

n. Who should I contact with questions about admissions?

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

o. 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 using the [IRCC Help Centre tool](#),
- [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 highly recommended that you consult a **regulated immigration professional** 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 enrollment.

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BEFORE ARRIVING IN BC/YUKON (CANADA)

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



a. Preparing your move to Canada

Before arriving in Canada, there are several steps you can take to prepare, such as deciding where to live and work. **CPAWSB does not have a formal campus or student housing**, so students must arrange their own accommodations.

To assist with your transition, we've provided resources on **settling in Canada, finding housing, understanding living expenses, and**

knowing your rights as a tenant:

- [Settling in Canada](#)
- [Where to Study in Canada](#)
- [Study Plan & Preparation](#) (knowing your rights as tenants)
- [Tenant rights - Province of British Columbia](#)

Planning ahead will help you navigate your new environment more smoothly.

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

To study or work in Canada, you must meet the eligibility criteria set by the IRCC. Refer to the official IRCC webpages for details on how to apply:

- [Study Permit Requirements & Application](#)
- [Work Permit for Temporary Employment](#)

Reviewing these resources will help you understand the process and ensure a smooth application.

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](#)

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SETTLING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (CANADA)

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.

- Bank of Montreal (BMO)
- CIBC
- Coast Capital
- HSBC
- Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)
- Scotiabank
- Tangerine
- Toronto Dominion (TD)
- Vancity

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 are 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 must show proof that you have health insurance.

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

[The B.C. Newcomers’ Guide](#) 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

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WHILE YOU ARE STUDYING

4. While you are studying



a. Where can I learn more about the academic policies I must adhere to when studying at CPAWSB?

As 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](#).

b. What kinds of educational support does CPAWSB offer?

CPAWSB provides educational support to help develop learners' technical and enabling competencies. Other [available educational supports](#) include academic advising, coaching, peer studying and tutoring.

c. 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 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.

d. What kinds of mental health support do you offer?

Balancing work and studies in the CPA program can bring new responsibilities, challenges, and stress. Prioritizing your mental health and wellbeing is essential. Taking care of yourself and being open to seeking support can help you manage stress effectively. To support its members, CPABC offers mental well-being resources, including counselling services. [Explore Mental Wellness Resources](#).

Taking proactive steps for your wellbeing can make a significant difference in your CPA journey. Don't hesitate to reach out for support when needed.

e. What type of employment services and resources are available to me as a learner?

Employment is a key requirement of the CPA program, as it fulfills the experiential component of the certification process. Learners are responsible for securing their own employment. CPABC also offers various resources to support learners in their job search. These include the [CPABC Careers website](#), Career Counselling, [the Career Connect e-newsletter](#), and various networking and career fairs. These resources help learners connect with employers, CPAs, and peers in BC, offering valuable networking and interview opportunities.

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.

For additional support, explore:

- [Prospective Students – CPA Program Experience Requirements](#)
- [Upcoming Events & Career Fair](#)
- [CPABC Chapter Events](#)
- [CPABC Careers Website](#)
- [CPA Program Events](#)

Additionally, learners who do not already have a valid work permit will need to obtain one to meet the program’s experiential requirements.

f. What are my employment rights while I reside in BC?

Part of attaining the CPA designation is gaining applied work experience. It is important to understand your employment rights when you are looking for work and once you start working. 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](#)

g. 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](#)

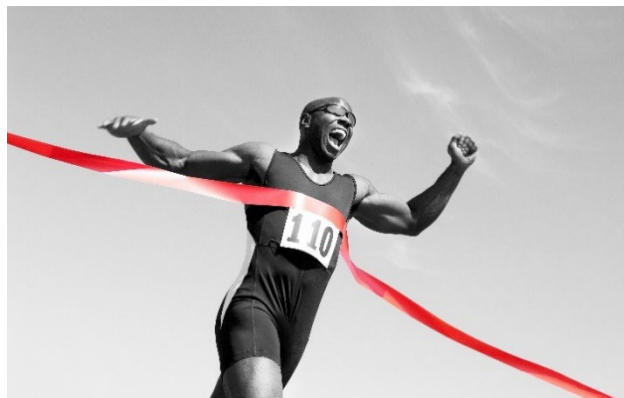
h. Does CPAWSB have a Crisis Management Policy?

Yes, this policy and the designated staff responsible can be found on our website at [Crisis Management Policy](#).

5

AFTER YOU GRADUATE

5. After you graduate



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

CPAs play a vital role across all industries and business sectors, from public practice and government to retail and manufacturing. They serve as advisors, business owners, and executives, shaping the financial landscape. [Learn more about the diverse roles of CPAs.](#)

In British Columbia, CPAs are in high demand to support the province's growing economy. [Discover why CPAs are essential in BC](#), where they [earn a median](#)

[compensation of \\$131,000](#). With **13,170 job opportunities** for financial auditors and accountants projected from 2024-2034, the profession offers strong career prospects. [Explore job opportunities in BC.](#) To learn more about why CPAs are in demand, their career growth potential, and how their compensation compares across Canada, check out these insights:

- [Why CPAs are in demand](#)
- [CPA compensation in BC and across Canada](#)

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. Learn more about [eligibility for Canadian CPAs applying for membership with an international accounting body](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Please refer to our most frequently asked questions about the CPA program here:

- [CPABC FAQs](#)
- [CPAWSB Administration FAQs](#)
- [CPAWSB Residency Study Permits and Language Advisory](#)