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government before you can apply for a study permit. Next you need to obtain a Canadian student visa application package, from the CIC website, your local visa office or the Canadian embassy or consulate in your home country.

You'll be given a personal checklist code to submit your application online. To do so, you must create a MyCIC account, where you'll fill in all your details, pay your fees and upload the required documents. This includes showing you have a ticket home and a valid passport. Some applicants may also need to attend an interview at their local visa office, and those from certain countries may need to provide biometrics, a medical exam or a police report.

On approval you'll be sent a letter of introduction, and a temporary residence

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visa if required. Bring these along with your passport, proof of your finances and your letter of acceptance to the border control agency in Canada, who will issue your Canadian study permit.

Tuition fees, living costs & funding

The cost of living and tuition fees in Canada are generally lower than in the US, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. As is common, the tuition fees are higher for international students than domestic students, and each establishment, course and province sets rates separately. Undergraduate courses are around C\$6,000 (US\$5,000) to C\$17,500 (US\$14,500) per year, while graduate programs could cost anywhere between C\$6,500 (US\$5,400) to C\$33,000 (US\$27,300) per year.

Student living in Canada costs from around C\$800 (US\$660) per month, though of course this depends on your spending habits. You'll need to budget for accommodation, food, travel and health insurance (compulsory) – and of course social, sports and cultural activities.

Exceptional international students may be able to obtain funding via the range of government and non-government scholarships available, such as the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program, or the 'International Tuition Award' offered by many Canadian universities. The latter aims to assist international graduate students registered full-time in research-oriented master's and doctoral programs. International students are automatically considered for this award as long as they meet certain criteria.

In order to apply for funding, it's best to check individually with each university for available scholarships, grants, assistantships, fellowships and bursary opportunities. You may also find it useful to consult the information about financial assistance provided by the Canadian Information Centre for

International Credentials website or the Canadian government's dedicated website for international scholarship programs (www.scholarships-bourses.gc.ca).

Your Canadian student visa entitles you to work 20 hours a week alongside your studies. This offers the opportunity to widen your social circle and to pursue an active and varied lifestyle in Canada as you learn.

Post-graduation careers

If you want to stay in Canada once your studies have finished, you'll need to apply for a post-graduation work permit allowing you to stay for up to three years after graduation. Speak to your International Student Development office for advice on this. Sectors experiencing high demand for graduates range from accountancy to healthcare, and of course software developers, engineering and UX designers. ■

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Elvis (Xiangkun) Cao
McGill University
MEng in Mining & Materials Engineering

Elvis is completing a master's degree in mining and materials engineering at McGill University in Montréal. He recalls being attracted by the country's generous scholarship opportunities, McGill's impressive number of Nobel laureates and Rhodes Scholars, and by the chance to study under the supervision of the renowned Professor Roderick I.L. Guthrie. "Luckily," he adds, "McGill chose me as well."

Having arrived full of curiosity and unsure what to expect, Elvis says the experience has more than lived up to his hopes. "I was surprised when I saw my 70-year-old supervisor doing experiments with us," he relates. "His life-long devotion to research and his curiosity to explore into the unknown world left me with a great impression." As well as finding motivation in the inspirational example set by his supervisor, Elvis also comments on the "free atmosphere" at the university, which further stimulates individual innovation.

Beyond studies, Elvis is enjoying exploring Montréal. While the freezing winters take some getting used to, he points out that the city's underground network of tunnels makes this easier to cope with, and he's full of praise for the many galleries and museums. "Though I'm studying engineering, I love most the art elements of this great city."