
Supporting International Graduate Students to Strengthen Canada's Research and Innovation Ecosystem

International graduate students are pivotal to Canada's research, innovation, and teaching capacity. They:

- **Advance technology sectors:** In the U.S., 143 unicorns in 2022 had a founder who first arrived as an international student (avg. 860 jobs/startup); 42% of top U.S. AI firms had a founder who was a former international student.
- **Drive R&D and commercialization:** Graduate students power a large share of university research and link labs to industry through RA/TA roles and spinouts.
- **Become long-term talent:** More than half of international students who pursue master's or PhD programs become permanent residents within 10 years, reinforcing Canada's advanced skills base.

University of Calgary Graduate Students' Association Survey

- About 500 graduate students across all faculties participated.
- 85% say Study Permit extension delays are a moderate/major/severe problem.
- 84% say Post-Graduation Work Permit delays are a moderate/major/severe problem.

The Challenges

1. **Study Permit errors at entry:** Missing work conditions (needed for TA/RA roles) and permit durations that don't cover full program length trigger revisions and extensions—adding workload for IRCC and disrupting students' research/teaching.
2. **Lengthy SP and PGWP processing:** Delays can cause health-care coverage lapses and prevent necessary research/family travel, elevating stress and harming productivity.
3. **System-wide knock-ons:** Universities rely on graduate students for teaching and research; permit problems stall courses, projects, and industry collaborations—dampening Canada's innovation output and reputation.

Why Fixing This Aligns with Canada's Strategy

- Canada has already signalled a commitment to attract U.S.-based, highly-skilled talent. Removing friction in SP/PGWP processing complements that strategy and helps retain top talent.

UCGSA Recommendations for IRCC

1. **Reduce errors in Study Permits** to minimize revisions and extensions (e.g., default inclusion of TA/RA work conditions; coverage through program end date).
2. **Simplify the Study Permit extension process** to maintain uninterrupted study and work.
3. **Simplify PGWP approvals** so graduates can transition quickly into the Canadian workforce and industry collaborations.
4. **Expedite SP and PGWP processing** to restore Canada's reputation for predictable, student-friendly service which is vital to global recruitment.