



Gastown business college

International Student Orientation Handbook



Mission, Vision & Values

Mission

To provide high-quality, accessible education that empowers students with practical knowledge, workplace readiness, and personal growth opportunities.

Vision

To be recognized as a respected private college in British Columbia, known for innovation in teaching, commitment to student support, and fostering strong ties between education and industry.

Values

Respect & Integrity

Treating all members of our community fairly and with dignity.

Excellence in Learning

Striving for the highest standards in teaching, learning, and assessment.

Diversity & Inclusion

Embracing cultural differences and promoting equity across all aspects of campus life.

Student Success

Supporting every student in achieving their educational and professional goals.

Community Engagement

Encouraging participation in local, cultural, and global initiatives that enrich both learning and society.

Orientation Session

In addition to this Orientation Handbook, GBC provides a mandatory Orientation Session for all international students at the beginning of their studies.

- The orientation may be delivered in-person on campus or virtually online, depending on circumstances.
- Attendance is required and ensures students are fully prepared to transition into both academic life and daily living in Vancouver.



The Orientation Session covers:



Academic Expectations

Attendance, and progression requirements.



GBC's Policies

Including dispute resolution, respectful treatment, harassment, and dismissal.



Living in Vancouver

Housing, tenancy rights, budgeting, and transportation.



Employment Rights

And conditions in British Columbia, including work while studying.



Health & Wellness

And safety resources, including emergency contacts and counselling.



Student Support

Services and designated staff contacts for international students.

By attending the orientation session, students gain essential knowledge, meet GBC staff, and connect with fellow students, creating a strong foundation for success in Canada.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgment

Gastown Business College acknowledges with deep respect that we operate on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaɫ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

Part II – Life in Vancouver & Canada

Cost of Living & Budgeting

Vancouver is one of Canada's most vibrant cities, but it also has a high cost of living. Students should carefully plan their budget before and during their studies. Key expenses include housing, food, transportation, insurance, and entertainment.



Helpful tools:



WorkBC Cost of Living Calculator

Helps estimate monthly expenses in BC.



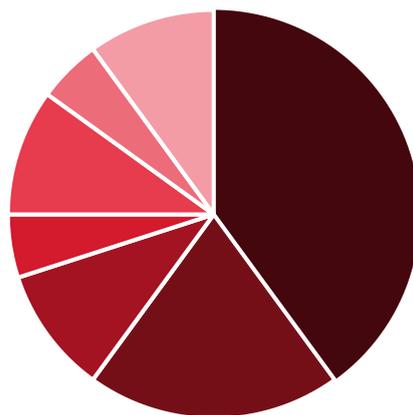
StrongerBC Cost of Living Resources

Provides updated information on inflation and living costs.



Study in BC

Student-focused resources for financial planning and settlement.



- Housing
- Food
- Transportation
- Insurance
- Entertainment
- Utilities
- Savings

Typical monthly budget breakdown for international students in Vancouver

Housing & Accommodation

Finding Housing

GBC provides guidance and resources to help students locate safe, affordable housing. Common platforms include:



Craigslist

Popular online classified ads for housing rentals.



Liv.rent

Rental platform with verified listings.



Facebook Marketplace

Social media platform with housing listings.



Zumper

Online rental marketplace for apartments and houses.



Housing Search Tips

Start your housing search at least 1-2 months before arrival. Vancouver's rental market is competitive, especially during August and September when many students are looking for accommodation.

Scam Prevention Tips

Always visit the property in person before signing a lease.

Meet the landlord or property manager to inspect the unit together.

Confirm the owner's identity and contact details.

Never send money before seeing the property and signing a lease.

Do not share sensitive personal information.

Trust your instincts and walk away if something feels wrong.

BC Tenancy Rights

In BC, tenants have the right to:

- Quiet enjoyment of their rental unit.
- Legal eviction procedures only (landlords cannot lock tenants out or change locks).
- Dispute resolution through the Residential Tenancy Branch.



Renters' Insurance

Tenants are strongly encouraged to purchase renters' (tenant) insurance. This protects personal belongings against theft, fire, or damage, and may include liability coverage. Speak with a licensed insurance agent or broker to understand costs and coverage options.

Important Resource

Visit the Residential Tenancy Branch website at gov.bc.ca/housing-tenancy for comprehensive information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant in British Columbia.

Transportation (TransLink & Compass Card)

The Lower Mainland has an extensive public transit system operated by TransLink (buses, SkyTrain, SeaBus, and West Coast Express).

Compass Card

The most convenient way to travel is by Compass Card, a reloadable smart card that works across the network. Cards can be purchased at:



Compass Vending Machines

Located at SkyTrain, SeaBus, West Coast Express stations



Select London Drugs locations

Retail stores throughout Vancouver



Compass Customer Service Centre

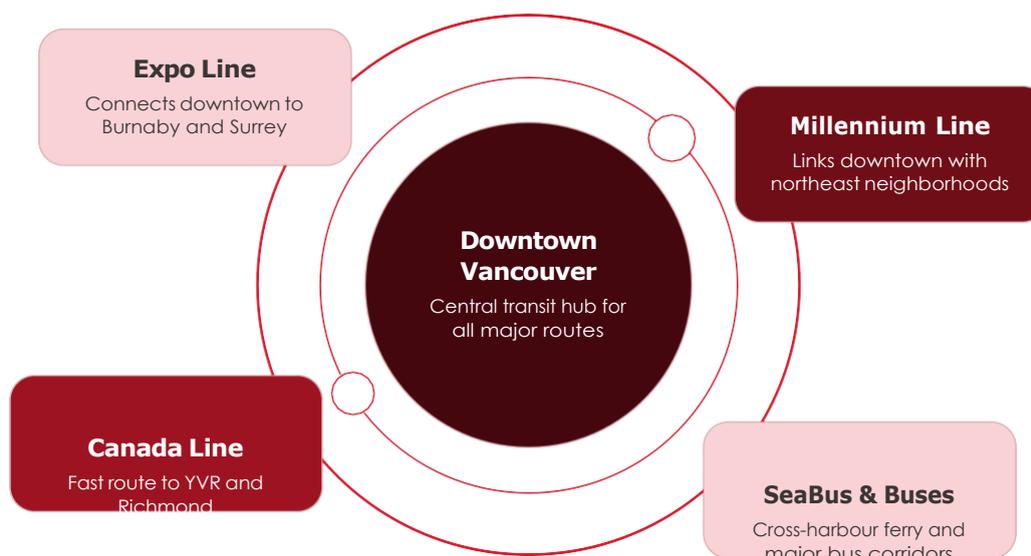
Located at Stadium-Chinatown Station



By phone

Call 604.398.2042

A refundable \$6 deposit is required for a new card. Students can reload funds online or at vending machines.



Banking in Canada

Opening a bank account is essential for managing expenses and receiving wages. Major banks in BC offer newcomer packages for students:

TD Bank

Newcomers to Canada Program

RBC

Newcomers to Canada Program

CIBC

Start Banking in Canada Program

Scotiabank

Welcome to Canada Program

BMO

New to Canada Program



Documents Needed to Open a Bank Account

- Passport or government-issued ID
- Study Permit
- GBC enrollment confirmation letter
- Canadian address proof (if available)

Most student accounts offer features like no monthly fees, unlimited transactions, and online/mobile banking access. Compare different banks to find the best option for your needs.



Health Care & Insurance

British Columbia requires all residents, including international students, to enroll in the Medical Services Plan (MSP).

- MSP covers basic medical services such as doctor visits and hospital care.
- New students may need private health insurance for the first three months while waiting for MSP coverage to begin.

Students are advised to apply for MSP immediately after arrival.



Arrival

Enroll in MSP and get private insurance



First 3 Months

Private insurance covers routine and emergency care



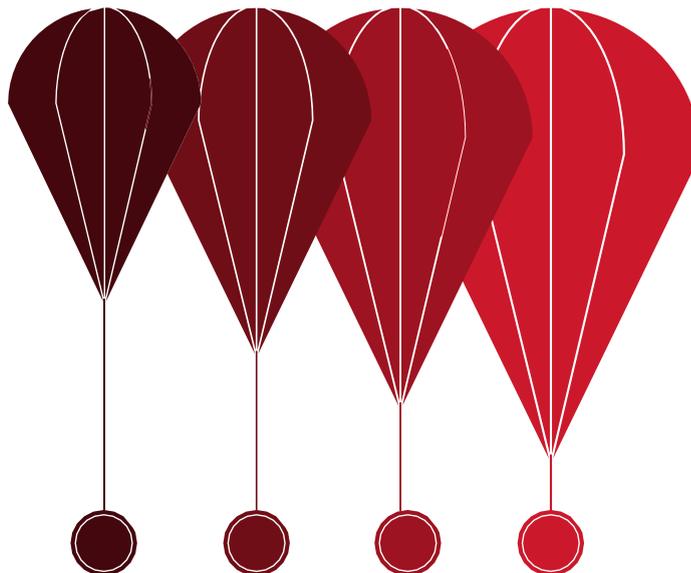
MSP Begins

MSP covers doctor visits and hospital care



Ongoing Coverage

Add-ons cover prescriptions and dental as needed



Important Health Insurance Information

The 3-month waiting period for MSP is mandatory. During this time, students must have private health insurance to cover any medical emergencies or healthcare needs. GBC can provide information about recommended private insurance providers.

Working in Canada

Social Insurance Number (SIN)

To work in Canada or access government benefits, students need a Social Insurance Number (SIN). Applications can be made:

01

Online

Through the Service Canada website

02

By mail

Send completed application forms

03

In person

At a Service Canada office

⚠ Keep your SIN confidential and share it only with employers, banks, or government agencies.

Employment Rights & Standards

Students should familiarize themselves with BC Employment Standards, which cover:

- Minimum wage
- Hours of work and breaks
- Overtime pay
- Vacation and holiday entitlements
- Protections for foreign workers



Helpful resources:

- Workplace Rights BC
- Government of BC – Employment Standards
- Government of Canada – Working Off Campus as an International Student

Co-op / Practicum Guidelines

Certain GBC programs include co-op or practicum components, which provide valuable workplace experience. These work terms are integrated into the program and must be completed to graduate.



Important Note:

GBC programs are not automatically eligible for a Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP). Students should verify their immigration options directly with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) before making post-study plans.

Academic Learning

Classroom instruction and theory

Reflection & Assessment

Evaluating the experience and learning



Co-op Application

Preparing resume and applying for positions

Interview Process

Meeting with potential employers

Work Experience

Applying skills in a real workplace

Part III – Academic Life at GBC

Academic Calendar & Scheduling

GBC follows a structured academic calendar with clearly defined class schedules, start dates, and holiday breaks. This helps students plan their studies effectively. Any schedule changes will be communicated by Student Services or your instructor via your GBC student email.

Facilities & Resources

Computer Labs & Student Card Access

GBC provides fully equipped computer labs and dedicated study areas to support student learning. Access requires presenting your GBC student ID card. These facilities are intended for academic purposes and are available during regular business hours (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm).



GBC Student Email

Every student is assigned a GBC email account. This is the official communication channel for:

- **Orientation details**
- **Course updates and instructor messages**
- **Assignments and exam notices**
- **Scholarship opportunities**
- **Campus announcements**

 Students must check their email regularly. For technical issues, contact admissions@gbcoll.ca.

Attendance Policy

GBC expects students to demonstrate professionalism by attending all scheduled classes.



Minimum Requirements

- Minimum 80% attendance is required for graduation.
- Minimum 85% attendance in-class is required to qualify for practicum work experience.

Absence Policies

- Students missing over 15% of in-class training may be dismissed.
- Absences of 3 or more days due to illness must be supported with a doctor's note.

Lateness

- Students arriving past the halfway point of a class session are marked absent.
- Lateness deductions: 30 minutes = 0.5 hour; 60 minutes = 1 hour.

Notification

- Absence notification must be emailed to reception@gbcol.ca before 9:00 a.m.
- Communications through classmates or instructors are not accepted.

⊗ Important Reminder

Consistent attendance is not only a requirement for graduation but also essential for academic success and developing professional habits that employers value.

Academic Progression & Advising

Campus Director Support

The Campus Director provides academic advising, graduation planning, and learning support. Students are encouraged to contact the Director early if they face academic challenges.

- Midway through each semester, the Director will remind students about support services and how to book advising sessions.
- Instructors also maintain regular office hours to assist students.



Workshops for Student Success

GBC offers periodic workshops to strengthen key academic skills:



Time Management

Learn strategies to balance coursework, employment, and personal life.



Writing & Communication Skills

Improve academic writing and presentation abilities.



Critical Thinking

Develop analytical and problem-solving capabilities.



Language Support

Additional resources for English language learners.

 Workshop notifications are sent via GBC student email.

Grade Appeal Policy

Students have the right to appeal final grades if they believe an error has occurred.

Step 1 – Informal Resolution

Students first discuss concerns with the instructor.

Step 2 – Written Appeal

If unresolved, a written appeal is submitted to the Campus Director within the designated timeframe.

Step 3 – Review

The Director reviews the appeal and may consult with faculty.

Step 4 – Final Decision

A formal written response is provided to the student.

All appeals are documented and filed in the student's academic record.

Student Leave Policy

GBC may grant authorized student leave for valid reasons, such as:

- Medical leave (with documentation)
- Compassionate leave (family emergencies, bereavement)
- Maternity/parental leave
- Religious or cultural observances
- Academic/professional activities



Procedures:

- A written request must be submitted in advance (except in emergencies).
- Supporting documents (e.g., medical certificates) may be required.
- The institution responds within 5 business days.
- Unauthorized absences may affect enrollment status.

Return from Leave:

- Students must notify GBC at least several days before returning.
- The institution assists with reintegration and catch-up.

Part IV – Student Rights & Responsibilities

At Gastown Business College (GBC), every student has the right to study in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment. With these rights also come responsibilities — including adherence to GBC policies and respect for peers, faculty, and staff.

Respectful & Fair Treatment Policy

GBC ensures that all students are treated fairly and respectfully, free from harassment, intimidation, or unfair academic practices.

- All students have the right to express their views in a respectful manner.
- Discrimination, bullying, and unfair treatment are not tolerated.
- Students must also respect instructors, staff, and peers, upholding a professional learning environment.



Harassment & Discrimination Policy

Harassment and discrimination are prohibited at GBC under the BC Human Rights Code.

⊗ Examples of prohibited conduct:

- Verbal or written slurs, insults, or jokes based on race, gender, religion, or disability.
- Unwelcome physical contact or intimidation.
- Discrimination in academic decisions based on protected grounds.

Students experiencing harassment should immediately report incidents to the Campus Director or use the online reporting form. External support is available through the BC Human Rights Tribunal.

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Zero Tolerance

GBC has a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual harassment, assault, and other forms of sexual misconduct.

Consent

Consent must be explicit and can be withdrawn at any time.

No Retaliation

Retaliation against students who report misconduct is prohibited.

Confidentiality

Reports are treated with confidentiality and respect.

Support Resources

Students may seek support through internal reporting channels or external services such as the BC Human Rights Tribunal and community crisis centres.

Anti-Racism & Zero Tolerance Statement

GBC is committed to equity, inclusion, and diversity. Racism, race-based harassment, and systemic barriers are strictly prohibited.

- Any form of racial discrimination will be addressed under the Dispute Resolution Policy.
- GBC fosters open dialogue, inclusion, and respect across all cultures.
- Students are encouraged to access learning resources such as the Government of BC's Anti-Racism Initiative and the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Dispute Resolution Policy

If students have complaints — whether academic or non-academic — GBC provides a structured dispute resolution process:



Informal Resolution

The student discusses the concern with the instructor or staff member.



Escalation

If unresolved, the student submits a formal written complaint to the Campus Director.



Review

The Director investigates and may consult relevant faculty/staff.



Decision

A written response is issued within a reasonable timeframe.

If the matter is still unresolved, students may pursue external complaint avenues such as the Private Training Institutions Branch (PTIRB).

Dismissal Policy

GBC may dismiss students from programs for serious policy violations, including but not limited to:

- Repeated violation of the Attendance Policy.
- Academic dishonesty or misconduct.
- Harassment, discrimination, or disrespectful behavior.
- Breach of the Sexual Misconduct Policy.
- Failure to pay tuition or fees by the required deadlines.



Dismissals follow a documented process, ensuring fairness and transparency. Students dismissed may have the right to appeal depending on the circumstances.

Part V – Financial Matters

Tuition Payment Plans & Scholarships

At GBC, we understand that financing education is an important consideration for students. To support accessibility, the college provides flexible tuition payment options and limited scholarship opportunities.

Payment Plans

- Tuition can be paid in installments according to the schedule outlined in the enrolment contract.
- Students must ensure payments are made on time; overdue accounts may result in penalties or dismissal in accordance with the Dismissal Policy.
- Payment methods include credit card, debit, wire transfer, and certified cheque.

Scholarships

- GBC offers a limited number of scholarships based on academic performance and community engagement.
- Scholarship details, eligibility, and application procedures are shared via the GBC student email system.
- Scholarships are applied directly to tuition fees and cannot be exchanged for cash.

Tuition Refund Policy

GBC's refund policy complies with the Private Training Institutions Branch (PTIRB) regulations in British Columbia. Refunds depend on the timing of withdrawal or dismissal, as outlined below.

Before Program Start Date

- Withdrawal within 7 days of signing the enrolment contract (and before program start):
 - 00% refund of tuition and related fees (except the application fee).
- Withdrawal more than 7 days after signing the enrolment contract (and before program start):
 - Institution may retain up to 10% of tuition, to a maximum of \$1,000.



After Program Start Date – In-Class / Combined Delivery / Synchronous Online

- Withdrawal/dismissal within 7 days of program start: Up to 10% tuition retained (max \$1,000).
- Up to 10% of instruction hours completed: Up to 10% tuition retained.
- 10%–30% of instruction hours completed: Up to 30% tuition retained.
- 30%–50% of instruction hours completed: Up to 50% tuition retained.
- More than 50% completed: No refund.

Asynchronous Online Programs (Distance-Only)

Refunds follow the same percentage structure as above, based on hours completed.

Special Cases

- Refusal of Study Permit: If a student is refused a study permit before 30% of the program has elapsed, GBC refunds 100% of tuition and related fees, except the application fee.
- Student does not attend first 30% of program ("no-show"): Institution may retain up to 50% of tuition.
- Program not provided as contracted (e.g., no work experience when promised): Institution refunds 100% tuition and related fees (except application fee).

Refund Timelines

All refunds are issued within 30 days of the institution receiving notice of withdrawal, dismissal, or refusal of study permit.

Critical Incident Policy

Gastown Business College (GBC) has a structured process for responding to critical incidents that may impact students, staff, or institutional operations.

What is a Critical Incident?

- Death, serious illness, or injury of a student or staff member.
- Threats or acts of violence.
- Fire, earthquake, or natural disasters.
- Bomb threats or violent intruders.
- Missing persons connected with GBC.

Roles & Responsibilities

- The **Critical Incident Coordinator (CIC)** (Campus Director) leads the response.
- The **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** includes senior management, student services, communications, and facilities/security representatives.



All incidents are documented using the official Incident Report Form.

Response Procedures



Ensure Safety

Ensure the safety of individuals; call 911 if needed.



Evacuate/Lock Down

Evacuate or lock down if necessary.



Provide Support

Provide first aid and immediate support.



Secure Scene

Secure the incident scene.



Communicate

Communicate updates factually and respectfully.



Follow-up Support

Offer counseling and follow-up support for those affected.



Remember

In any emergency situation, your safety and the safety of others is the top priority. Follow all instructions from GBC staff and emergency personnel.

Emergency Procedures & Key Contacts

In case of an emergency, students should follow these steps:

Call 911

For police, fire, or medical emergencies.

Campus Safety

Follow evacuation routes posted in classrooms and hallways.

Service Canada

1-800-622-6232 3 for federal resources, including Employment Insurance, SIN, and benefits.

Mental Health Support

Here2Talk (1-877-857-3397 / here2talk.ca) 3 24/7 mental health support for post-secondary students in BC, with services in multiple languages.

Local Non-Emergency Numbers

- Vancouver Police Department: 604-717-3321
- BC NurseLine (HealthLink BC): 8-1-1

Health & Wellness Support

GBC recognizes that international students may face stress in adjusting to a new academic and cultural environment. The college offers access to internal and external wellness resources:



Counselling Services

Confidential sessions available upon request.



Wellness Workshops

Periodically offered on stress management, time management, and study skills.



Peer Support

Student ambassadors and peer mentors available to guide newcomers.



Community Resources

Referrals to MOSAIC, SUCCESS, and Vancouver Coastal Health for settlement and mental health services.

Disability & Accessibility Services

GBC is committed to providing equitable access to education for students with disabilities.

Accommodation Process

- Students requiring accommodations should contact the Campus Director or Student Services.
- Accommodations may include extra exam time, adapted learning materials, or accessibility support in classrooms.
- Documentation (e.g., medical note or professional assessment) may be required to determine appropriate support.

Accessibility in BC is guided by the [Accessible BC Act](#), which ensures students with disabilities are protected from discrimination and provided with reasonable adjustments.

Did You Know?

Early disclosure of accessibility needs helps GBC prepare appropriate accommodations before your program begins.

Local Community Integration Support

Living and studying in Canada is not only about academic success, but also about becoming part of the local community. GBC encourages students to get involved in cultural, volunteer, and social opportunities to make their transition smoother.

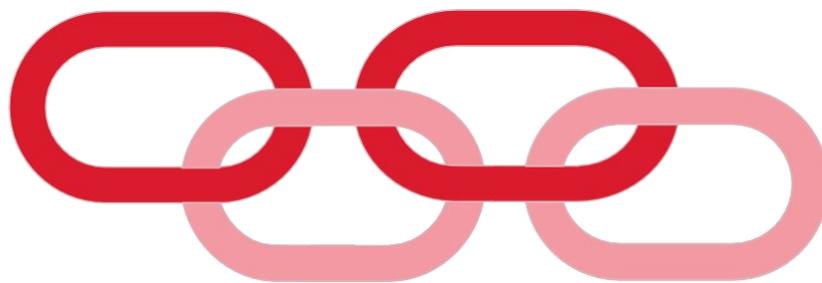
Community Events

- Vancouver hosts year-round events such as Car Free Day, Celebration of Light, Lunar New Year, Diwali Fest, and Indigenous Peoples Day.
- Students are encouraged to attend multicultural events to expand their understanding of Canadian society.



**Cultural
Understanding**

**Language
Improvement**



**Social Network
Building**

**Sense of
Belonging**

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteering is a meaningful way to build Canadian experience and improve networking skills. Reliable organizations include:



MOSAIC

Settlement and employment services for newcomers.



United Way BC

Community initiatives supporting families, seniors, and youth.



Neighbourhood Houses

Local organizations offering events, English conversation clubs, and volunteer opportunities.

Benefits of Volunteering

- Gain practical Canadian workplace experience.
- Improve communication and teamwork skills.
- Build references for future employment.
- Give back to the community while making new friends.



Indigenous Peoples of BC & Cultural Awareness

British Columbia is home to diverse Indigenous Nations with rich histories, cultures, and traditions.

The Vancouver area is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the **Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations**.

Learning Opportunities

- Students are encouraged to learn about Indigenous history and ongoing reconciliation efforts in Canada.
- Local organizations such as the Museum of Anthropology (UBC) and the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art provide valuable cultural learning opportunities.



Cultural Respect at GBC:

- Respect cultural differences, traditions, and values in your interactions.
- Recognize Canada's multicultural society and the importance of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

Networking & Career Development Opportunities

Adjusting to Canadian work culture often requires building strong professional networks. GBC supports students by providing tools and opportunities to strengthen employability.

Career Fairs

Vancouver regularly hosts job fairs for students and newcomers.

Meetup Groups & LinkedIn Events

A great way to connect with professionals in business, marketing, tourism, and hospitality.

Volunteering

A recognized method of networking and gaining Canadian experience.

Career Development at GBC

- Workshops: Resume writing, interview preparation, and workplace communication.
- Guest Speakers: Industry professionals share career pathways and insights.
- Co-op & Practicum Placements: Provide real-world Canadian workplace exposure (mandatory for certain programs).



⊗ Important Note

While co-op and practicum experiences support skill-building, they do not guarantee future employment or immigration outcomes. Post-Graduation Work Permits (PGWPs) are not available for GBC programs unless otherwise specified by IRCC.

Daily Life & Student Resources

Vancouver Public Library (VPL)

- Free library card available to all residents.
- Access to study spaces, free Wi-Fi, online learning platforms, and English conversation programs.

Digital Tools for Students

- Grammarly: Assists with English writing and grammar.
- Google Calendar: Helps students manage schedules and deadlines.
- Trello / Asana: Useful project management apps for academic and group assignments.
- Zoom & MS Teams: Common platforms for online meetings and presentations.

Tips for Daily Success

- Plan your week using online or physical planners.
- Stay active by exploring Vancouver's parks and recreation centres.
- Use free apps to track spending and budgeting.
- Practice English daily in community settings such as cafes, volunteer spaces, or student clubs.

Designated International Student Support Contact

Gastown Business College has designated the following staff as the official points of contact for international students:

- Senior Educational Administrative (SEA):
Ankita Saini:
ankita@gastownbusinesscollege.ca
- Digital Marketing Manager:
Mostafa Roayaei:
mostafa@gastownbusinesscollege.ca
- Digital Marketing Manager:
Margarette C Bagsit
meg@gastownbusinesscollege.ca
- Campus Director:
Kalai Ponniah
kalai.ponniah@gastownbusinesscollege.ca

Business Program Comparison Guide

- **Courses (with duration & hours)**
- **Practicum/Co-op components**
- **Total Duration & Hours**
- **Career/Job Opportunities**

To get access to the detailed tables for each program, please refer to these links on the GBC website:

[**BFPC \(Business Fundamentals with Practicum & Co-op\)**](#)

[**iBF \(international Business Fundamentals\) with Co-op**](#)

[**iBH \(international Business and Hospitality Fundamentals\) with Co-op**](#)

[**International Business and Marketing \(IBM\)**](#)

[**International Canada Individual Skills Training \(INCIST\)**](#)

[**BFC \(Business Fundamentals with Co-op\)**](#)

2025 Program Schedule

We offer multiple entry points throughout the year to accommodate your schedule. Please review the following start dates for our 2026 programs:

1

January

- 06-Jan-26
- 27-Jan-26

2

February

- 03-Feb-26

3

March

- 03-Mar-26

4

April

- 07-Apr-26

5

May

- 26-May-26

6

June

- 23-Jun-26

7

July

- 21-Jul-26

8

August

- 18-Aug-26

9

September

- 15-Sep-26

10

November

- 17-Nov-26

 Please note that all program dates are subject to availability. We recommend applying early to secure your preferred start date.

Early Registration

Early registration is recommended as classes fill up quickly. Contact our admissions office to reserve your spot for any of the above start dates.

Program Duration

Program length varies by course. Please refer to specific program details for complete information on duration and curriculum.