

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE



VANCOUVER ISLAND, CANADA

Host Accommodation Handbook



our
Change ~~your~~ world.

Greetings from the Office of Global Engagement!

Thank you for your interest in hosting an international student.

Becoming a host family to a student from a different country and culture is both an enriching and challenging experience. We hope you and your family will enjoy hosting an international student.

Let common sense guide your hosting experience. Keep communications open between you, your student, and the OGE staff so that problems or concerns may be dealt with immediately. While adjustment problems may arise because of different backgrounds, most can be resolved through open discussion.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the Office of Global Engagement.

Sincerely,

Marjola Muellner

Accommodations Officer

Phone (office): 250.334.5033 Ext #2

Cell phone (emergency only): 250. 898-7383

Fax: 250.334.5287

Email: Marjola.Muellner@nic.bc.ca

Hosting Responsibilities

Providing an international student with a safe and comfortable place to live and learn can be a rewarding experience for everyone in the family, yet it requires time and commitment. Sharing your home is a unique opportunity for cultural exchange with a young person from another country. International students can choose from a range of accommodation options when they come to North Island College. Please read the information below specific to the type of accommodation that you will be providing and become familiar with your responsibilities as a host.

Homestay Host

Preparation

Plan to do some research into the country your student is from. Finding out as much as you can about things such as climate, lifestyle, food, and customs will facilitate understanding. The following websites may be helpful with your research:

Canadian Centre for Intercultural Learning

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cfsi-icse/cil-cai/index-eng.asp>

The World Fact Book

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>

You might even want to learn a few simple words or phrases of greeting in your homestay student's language or prepare a traditional dish from their country.

You should begin corresponding by email with your student as soon as you receive your introductory email so that a relationship can be established. Students and their families appreciate receiving photos of your home, your family and even your pets. Encourage them to do the same.

The Student's Room

Make sure your student's room is ready before they arrive. The room should be fully furnished with a bed, linens, dresser, lamp, desk, chair and closet. There should also be some storage space available to the student in their bedroom or elsewhere in your home for their luggage.

Canadian winters are very cold for most visitors so your student may be chilly at night. Please ensure there are extra blankets available and even a portable heater if the room is in the

basement. You will need to provide instructions on use and tell the student to turn the heater off when they're not in the room.

Key

Prepare a house key for your student.

Maps and Transportation

NIC provides a bus schedule and local map. Spend some time orienting your student to this information and travel to NIC and home again with them once.

Handbook

Familiarize yourself with this Host Accommodation Handbook as well as the Student Accommodation Handbook which is also on the NIC website.

Home Insurance

Ensure adequate arrangements for home insurance have been made.

Criminal Record Check

A criminal record check for all members of the household 19 years of age and older must be completed and submitted to the OGE office prior to students being placed in your home. This service is provided for a fee by the RCMP.

Emergency Contact Card

Please help your student fill out their emergency contact card with your address, phone number and contact information. Students should keep this card with them at all times so that if they get lost, they can contact you and find their way home. This card is given to students at orientation.

Custodianship

Students who are under the age of majority in BC (19) when they arrive may have a custodianship agreement with the college. This may have been requested by the student's parents, their agent, or an immigration officer. By law, a custodianship agreement requires that the custodian make adequate arrangements for the care and support of the minor child until such time as the child turns 19 years old. The custodian at North Island College is the Associate Director, Office of Global Engagement.

You will be notified when a student studying under a custodianship agreement is placed in your home. Please note that this means that NIC (not the host family) has an extra responsibility to the student. At NIC, arrangements for the care and support of students under a custodianship agreement include:

- Students must live in homestay until they turn 19;
- Students must see an NIC counselor monthly, and;
- Students must meet with the custodian to seek administrative permission to travel outside the Comox Valley unless they are traveling with their host families.

Students are informed of these requirements at orientation.

Arrival

Airport/Bus Pick-up

Once correspondence begins with the student, hosts should ask for their student's flight/bus arrival information. Please confirm this information with the student before they fly as arrangements can change at the last minute during peak travel times. Hosts are expected to meet their student at the airport or bus depot. A sign with the student's name on it will be helpful when you greet your student at the airport or bus station.

Getting settled

House Tour and Household Guidelines

When your student arrives, he or she will likely be tired from many hours of travel. Encourage your new guest to sleep and rest as much as they need during the first day or two. Once the student is rested, please give a comprehensive tour of your home. Don't assume they will know how to operate everyday items (anything from light switches to shower taps could be unfamiliar). Be as clear as you can.

Some specifics to share with your student might include:

- The shower curtain needs to be placed inside the bathtub.
- Toilet paper must be flushed down the toilet but nothing else like sanitary napkins or paper towels.
- Tap water is normally safe to drink.
- Shoes should be removed when entering your home.
- Certain appliances should not be handled (e.g., thermostat, BBQ)

- Door locks and the use of security systems should be demonstrated.
- Local recycling practices should be explained
- The bathroom door should be left open when not in use.
- A schedule for use of the laundry facilities needs to be worked out.

The Office of Global Engagement does not set the rules in your home. As soon as possible please explain your household guidelines and why they are important to your family. By having an honest and open discussion in the beginning, you will avoid confusion and miscommunication later. Students appreciate knowing what is expected of them. Plan to check in with your student periodically to address their questions and seek feedback on how your guidelines are working for them

Start thinking about your family's schedule and routine and decide how the student might fit into it. You will need to decide on areas where you can and cannot be flexible. Some things to think about are: What time do you usually eat meals? Think about a schedule and time limit for showering and bathing. What time do you normally go to bed? Is there a specific study time in your home? Will your student be allowed to have food and drink in the bedroom? Around the computer? In front of the television? What are normal room temperatures during the day and at night?

You may want to write or type your guidelines out because some students have a stronger level of reading than oral comprehension. A friendly reminder may be needed from time to time as your student may forget and lapse into what was familiar back home.

You will need to make the guidelines age-appropriate (e.g., time expected home in the evening,) and bear in mind that the student is coming from a very different household environment so adaptability will be important wherever necessary.

You may also need to re-evaluate the guidelines over time to take into account the student's maturity and your own family's needs. College students from other cultures may have different levels of maturity, independence and life skills than their Canadian counterparts and may therefore need additional support and guidance at first. Some guidelines that are typical in a home with international students are:

- Keep your room clean and tidy.
- Clean up after using the bathroom or kitchen.
- Follow family schedule of meals and quiet time.
- Notify host of a change in plans, such as not coming home for dinner.
- Ask for permission to invite guests over.
- Limit shower length.

Meals

Provide three balanced meals per day plus snacks. The student may make his/her own breakfast and lunch to take to school. If he/she wishes to buy lunch or other meals while away from home, it is the student's responsibility to pay for those meals; however, food needs to be provided for your student to make a suitable lunch each day. It is expected that meals offered are wholesome, balanced and include a variety of proteins.

If the family eats out, it is your responsibility to pay for your student's meal because you have agreed to provide 3 meals each day. If you are not home for an evening meal and the student does not accompany you, leave food for the student to heat up.

If you are going away for a few days please inform the student. In such cases you should prepare meals for him/her ahead of time, or leave food or an appropriate amount of money so that your student can purchase groceries and make his/her own meals. We expect host families to ensure that students are able to eat as well when you're away as when you are at home preparing meals for them.

If you are going to be away please also advise the Accommodations Officer and let her know what arrangements you have made for your student. This might include a family friend checking on the student, or the student staying with a friend.

Pets

Different cultures have different traditions of pet ownership; dogs and cats may not be kept as house pets in some cultures. If you own animals, they may be frightening to your student. Being aware of this by helping your student get used to your pets at a slow and comfortable pace will be appreciated. Make sure your student learns your routine around pet care.

Community Tour

Take your student on a tour of your community and local area showing points of interest such as shopping malls, banks, convenience stores, community centers, fitness facilities, etc.

Family Activities

Please be inclusive; invite your student to participate in as many family activities as possible. Even everyday excursions such as grocery shopping, gassing up the car or visiting a neighbor can be interesting for them. If activities have costs, please be sure to discuss these costs ahead of time. This will allow the student to decide if he/she wants to participate.

Transportation

If necessary, students are responsible for purchasing a bus pass. These are sold at our campus bookstore monthly or by term. Show your student where the closest bus stop is and which bus numbers to take to get to and from school. On the first trip to the campus, hosts are expected to assist so the student does not get lost, even if this means riding the bus along with them. Please advise your student if other convenient options are available, such as walking or riding a bike to school.

In cases of extreme weather, or when you happen to be going in the same direction, it is appropriate to offer the student a ride, but they must not expect you to transport them on a daily basis.

Laundry

If you will be doing your student's laundry, provide them with a dirty clothes hamper and tell them when the laundry will be done. The responsibility for folding and putting clothes away is theirs.

If your student will be responsible for doing their own laundry, be sure to explain how to work the machines and when they may use them.

Ensure your student knows what to do with your clothes if they are left in the machines.

Telephone

Many students arrive with a mobile phone from their country but no service plan for Canada. If they need help with the application process, you may help them, but under no circumstances should you pay for their phone service. If the student cannot afford cell phone service he or she can use other means of communication.

Help your student to purchase a long distance phone card and require that it be used when making long distance phone calls on your landline.

If you have one phone line that family members share, ensure your student knows about time limits.

Explain your phone's features, like call waiting, if applicable.

Computer

Most students have a laptop when they arrive because they must have regular computer and internet access to complete assignments and to keep in touch with important people back home. Please be flexible in understanding that when students come from countries on the other side of the globe, they will be communicating with family overseas at odd hours, most

likely during the night because of the time differences. Ask your student to keep his or her door closed and his voice down if they are talking while your family is asleep. It is your responsibility to explain downloading restrictions and times the computer is available if they are using your computer. If you have wireless, provide them with a password for access and explain the importance of keeping it private. Host homes are expected to have internet access.

Privacy

Your student should be told that you will respect their privacy by knocking on the bedroom door before entering and that you ask the same in return.

Be clear that you will not pry into personal belongings, phone conversations, mail, etc.

Religion

Attending church may be an important part of your student's life. If you attend church, your student may want to attend with you or choose to attend their own church. Under no circumstances must they be required to attend your church or practice your religious beliefs. If requested, please help your student to find a suitable church in your neighborhood.

Bank Account

Assist your student to open a bank account so that they can receive, save and pay out funds when necessary. We strongly recommend one of the five major national banks as they are able to meet the students' international banking needs.

Money

Students are required to have their own spending money to cover incidental expenses, like entertainment, personal items, school supplies, cell phones and transportation fees. Host families are to avoid lending money to students for any reason, even if the student's money is slow in arriving from their country.

Students who choose to participate in family holidays, travel or extracurricular activities where costs are incurred are expected to share the costs. If the student chooses not to participate in the activity, the host family and the student must make alternate accommodation and meal arrangements that are acceptable to all.

It is a good idea to discuss the extra costs with your student up front. When expectations are clear from the beginning, it is less awkward than waiting until there is a situation and dealing with it then.

Payments & Refunds

Payment of fees for Homestay and Peerstay Accommodation will be charged as follows:

- Students send their Accommodation Application Form to the Accommodations Officer at NIC. A \$250 non-refundable application fee is applied to the student’s NIC account.
- The Accommodations Officer places the student in a home with a local host family.
- The student and the host family each sign an agreement, showing they understand their responsibilities to one another.
- A non-refundable charge for the first complete month is placed on the student’s NIC account.
- NIC pays the host family for the student’s first month’s accommodation.
- On the first day of the second full month, the student pays their monthly accommodation fee to their host family directly by cash or cheque.
- Students continue to pay their monthly fee to their host family at the beginning of each month they live with their host family.

Type of Accommodation	Application Fee	Monthly fee	Daily fee
Homestay	\$250	\$800	\$25
Peerstay	\$250	\$500	\$17

Example:

A student is placed in homestay accommodation and arrives on April 28th. The first full month starts on May 1st.

The student is charged for the first complete month of accommodation. **\$800**

The student is charged a one-time nonrefundable application fee. **\$250**

These nonrefundable fees are placed on the student’s NIC account. **\$1050**

For homestay students there is no refund for short-term absences of 7 nights or less and if students are away for an 8th night or more, they will be refunded \$8/day starting on the 8th day. There is no refund for peerstay students for short-term absences.

Summer

During the summer break, if your student returns to their home country and you want to use the student's room (e.g. for guests or short-term summer students), ask your students to pack up their belongings neatly and show them where they can be stored.

Emergencies

Ensure your student knows to dial 911 in case of an emergency.

If there is an emergency involving your student, always call 911 first. Then, contact the Accommodation Officer with the details of the emergency.

Canadian Customs

Your customs may be very different and unfamiliar to your student and vice versa. For instance, we tend to eat dinner quite a bit earlier than in many countries. When talking about differences, it is important to discuss them as cultural differences rather than right vs. wrong ways of doing things.

Some of the differences you will see may be obvious, like table manners and others may be subtler, like opinions about the roles of women, parents or other ethnic cultures. This may affect your student's inclination to help out around the house or how he/she communicates with your family. Conversations from the beginning about expectations will avoid unpleasantness later. If you need help with this, please talk to the staff at OGE. We expect you will attend our Hosting Workshops for more information, advice and support. These are made available three times a year, usually just after the beginning of each term.

Food

This is one area where students may need to make a quick adjustment, and for some it is not easy. It can be helpful to take your student to some grocery stores around the valley a couple of times a month to stock up on their "comfort" foods. Please ensure that students have access to a balanced diet and a variety of proteins including meat if this is their preference.

Students may have special dietary needs related to health, religion, or personal preference. Encourage them to try new foods, but always respect their preferences, and do not force foods on them.

If you are hosting an Asian or African student, consider purchasing a rice cooker. Rice is a staple in their diets, so this can be a very useful addition to your kitchen.

Communication

If your student speaks English as an additional language, please be patient, speak slowly (not loudly) during the first couple of weeks and be prepared to repeat yourself as your student struggles to understand. You can help your student by keeping long and complex discussions to a minimum the first couple of days. Use simple sentences and simple vocabulary as you get to know your student and their level of English.

Students may find the transition easier if you demonstrate interest in their home country and culture.

Moving Out

If the student wants to move out, they should give you two weeks' notice. In emergencies, students can be moved out quickly. Please contact the Accommodations Officer if you need immediate support.

Sometimes a student may request to be moved, but please do not take this personally. Some students suffer from culture shock, and sometimes personalities don't mesh. If your student is moved it does not mean that you cannot have another student. In fact, having another student is recommended.

If you want your student to move out, you need to give your student and OGE two weeks' notice.

Departure

Arrange to take your student to the airport/bus depot when they are returning home. If they would like to ship any items home, please assist them with this.

Peerstay Host

With the exception of the information found below we have the same expectations of Peerstay hosts as Homestay hosts. Peerstay hosts should refer to the Homestay Host information outlined in the previous section.

The difference between Homestay and Peerstay is that the Peerstay students are more independent and are expected to buy their own groceries and make their own meals. The Peerstay host is expected to: provide Peerstay students with access to a fully equipped kitchen, to teach them how to use the kitchen facilities, how to clean-up the kitchen after cooking, and

to inform them of any additional rules or expectations when it comes to cooking meals. It will be useful to spend the first couple of days helping your students to function in your kitchen until a level of comfort is reached.

Questions and Answers

1. Is the host responsible for:

- **Individual items?** Students are responsible for purchasing their own toiletry items, school supplies, social events etc.
- **Student finances?** Students are responsible for setting up their own bank accounts. Host families should not monitor spending or lend money. While babysitting is not expected, if a student does provide babysitting services, families should pay for this service at a competitive rate.
- **Monitoring food?** Families should not put the student on any kind of diet including one for personal or religious beliefs.
- **Monitoring student academic progress?** All students are adults or, on rare occasions minors with custodianship agreements. Students are solely responsible for their academic success. Hosts are welcome and encouraged to engage students in conversations about their studies but are not required or expected to monitor their progress. If hosts are aware that students are having difficulties, please refer them to our Student Advisors who will direct them to appropriate assistance. Students who are studying English will be pleased to have opportunities to engage with host family members and we encourage lots of discussion.
- **Student emotional/physical well-being?** While hosts are not responsible for the emotional and physical well-being of students, OGE does ask that the host monitors this and encourages contact with OGE if there is any cause for concern.

2. What are the steps to become a host for international students?

- All host families are required to complete the OGE Host Family Application Form
- All host family applicants are required to meet with and have their home inspected by the OGE Accommodations Officer or his/her representative to ensure it meets the OGE Home Provider Standard.
- Hosts will be asked to provide criminal record checks for everyone in the home 19 years of age or older.

- OGE has very limited control over the screening of students although all students will have been approved for entry to Canada by Canadian Immigration Service. Please understand the risks involved by accepting students into your home. If there is a reason for concern, hosts should contact OGE staff immediately.
- Ensure that your home is adequately insured.
- Please ensure that you have appropriate insurance on all vehicles in which students will travel, and there are adequate seat belts for all passengers. Students should not be allowed to drive your vehicles.
- Students are advised to purchase their own insurance policy for personal items, as their personal belongings are not covered under your home insurance.
- If there are changes to the hosting information you have given to OGE, please notify OGE staff of these changes as soon as possible.

3. What Medical and Dental Coverage is provided for Students?

Medical:

OGE staff will help students apply for private insurance for the first 3 months of their stay. Students receive a medical card with their plan number. If they need to see a doctor or visit a hospital, they will likely have to pay for the service. Our International Marketing Assistant can assist them in claiming back the funds. <http://www.guard.me/>

Students staying longer than three months are assisted to apply for the B.C Medical Service Plan upon arrival. They will receive their B.C Medical Card 2-3 months after application. This BC coverage takes effect at the beginning of the 4th month and then students will have access to medical services in the same way as any BC resident. Student's MSP expires at the same time as their study permit, so they must reapply for MSP when they receive their new Study Permit. Our International Marketing Assistant can assist the student with this process.

Note: students studying in defined 4-6 month programs will likely have their own medical insurance.

Dental: Students will be responsible for the payment of any dental care they require while in Canada. You may need to help them find a dentist.

4. What insurance coverage do I need?

Hosts should be certain that their vehicles are insured to carry international students as passengers. Hosts should notify their household insurance agents of their student's presence to be sure that their policies cover liability in the event of injury, theft, etc.

5. What challenges might the student experience during their stay?

- Homesickness
- English Language difficulties
- Challenges making new friends
- Difficulties interpreting culture-specific social cues
- Conflicts with host families
- Different rules and expectations from their home country
- Emotional difficulties
- Financial difficulties

6. How will I know when the student is facing these difficulties?

- The student is not attending classes regularly.
- The student does not seem to be learning English.
- The student does not talk about new friends or positive activities.
- The student spends excessive time alone.
- The student calls home frequently or spends excessive time online.
- The student becomes irritable or has angry outbursts.
- The student becomes anxious, depressed or sullen.
- The student does not perform well in school.
- The student is not eating regularly.
- The student has gained or lost an excessive amount of weight.

7. What should I do if the student is facing these difficulties?

- Talk to the student about the signs you are seeing.
- Ask open-ended questions, allowing the student to talk freely.
- Help the student find activities to become involved in.
- Include the student in family activities.
- Offer time to talk/listen in English.
- Encourage the student to talk to the OGE staff.

- Notify the Accommodations Officer or Student Advisor if the student is encountering exceptional problems such as illness, significant difficulty adapting to the host family or school, anxieties about family matters, or serious homesickness.

8. How should I deal with conflicts with student(s)?

- First, it is important to recognize that some unwanted behavior results from cultural differences, so the student may not understand the seriousness of your concern. Let the student know this is important to you.
- Discuss conflicts openly even though it may be difficult to do so.
- If your attempt to resolve a conflict is unsuccessful, please contact the Accommodations Officer for assistance.

9. Is there a college orientation for new students?

A few days after your student's arrival, he or she participates in orientation to the college and community. There is a session specifically for homestay/peerstay students during orientation. Course planning, English language assessments and Academic assessments are completed during orientation.

Any questions your student has about how to register, what courses to take, and how to get academic assistance are best answered by OGE staff.

Please contact the Office of Global Engagement if you have any comments, questions, or concerns regarding your accommodation experience.

Contact Information for the Office of Global engagement

Thevi Pather, Executive Director

Cathy Mutis, Associate Director

Markella McKay, Administrative Assistant

Angie Price, Advisor, International Student Success

Li Yan, Advisor, International Student Success

Disha Salhan, International Marketing Assistant

Marjola Muellner, Accommodations Officer

Rabs Sachedina, International Admissions Officer

Jennifer Barth, Global Engagement Liaison

Candace Jesson, Manager, International Enrollment & Agent Relations

Address: 2300 Ryan Road, Courtenay, B.C., Canada, V9N 8N6

Phone: 250 334-5033 ext: 2

Fax: 250 334-5287

Web: www.nic.bc.ca/international

Email: study@nic.bc.ca

Please also follow us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/NorthIslandCollegeWelcometheWorld.NICW2

NIC is a hive of activity both inside the classroom and out. Getting involved is easy. Regardless of where your interest lies, NICW2 is THE place to get connected. View our EVENTS tab to keep up on events & activities designed for you!