



International Student Services Office (ISSO)
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Explanation Letters for Immigration Applications

Many applications to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for study permit renewal, a co-op work permit, or a Post-Graduation Work Permit don't require a letter of explanation. Information that is supplied in the application form and the supporting documentation are sufficient for the immigration officer to decide to approve the application.

Examples of When a Letter of Explanation is Needed

Here are some situations when a letter of explanation should be included.

- When applying to restore status, to explain circumstances related to the loss of status.
- To explain breaks in studies, slower than usual progress toward program completion, or periods of unauthorized study or work.
- When a required document is not available, or not available in time to submit the application or respond to an officer request. The letter of explanation can be uploaded in its place. It should be accompanied with proof of the student's efforts to get the requested document.
- If an application includes a lot of supporting documents, a letter of explanation can provide a list and summary to help the officer understand the purpose of each of the documents.

Often a letter of explanation is a request for the officer to overlook a breach of immigration rules or some weakness in the application. It is an appeal to the officer's discretion. We don't always know how much discretion the officer has, or whether they will use it in the applicant's favour. But there are times when we know that an application is likely to be refused if no explanation is provided.

The content of the explanation letter will be specific to the student and their situation.

Tips for Writing a Letter of Explanation

Taking the time to write a good letter is respectful of the officer's limited time. It will also help the application to be successful.

- Write briefly and to the point. Use simple English. Avoid long "run-on" sentences.
- Organize content logically as a story or argument.
- Organize writing physically with headings, bullet points, or a timeline, where appropriate.
- Attach supporting documents and/or provide web links to substantiate points in the letter.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the obligations of a temporary resident in Canada, and of an applicant for a study or work permit.

- If a mistake was made in the past, explain it in a matter-of-fact way and apologize. If appropriate, request that the mistake be considered in the context of overall compliance and/or hard work during the applicant’s time in Canada.
- Thank the officer for consideration of the explanation and ask them to kindly approve the application.

Suggested Format

Date: [current date]

To: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Re: Online application for [...]

UCI: [Client ID number with IRCC, found on the study or work permit or in a previous application]

Dear Immigration Officer,

I am providing additional information for your consideration related to my application for [study permit or work permit].

[Letter content specific to your application]

Thank you for your kind consideration of this information. I hope that it will allow you to decide to issue a [study permit or work permit] to me.

Yours truly,

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

How to Provide the Letter to IRCC

Letters of explanation can be send to IRCC in one of these ways:

- Merged with other uploaded documents
- Uploaded to the application line called “Client Information”
- Sent via [IRCC Web Form](#), if the application has already been submitted
- Uploaded to a new line in the application, if the officer has requested new documents after the original submission. *Important:* After uploading the new document(s), click on “Next” to sign and submit the new document.

Contact the ISSO for Help

Carleton students are welcome to contact the ISSO’s immigration advising team for assistance related to letters of explanation. Email us at: immigration.advising@carleton.ca