



# STUDENT HANDBOOK



Nova Scotia  
International  
Student  
Program

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# WELCOME

## **TO THE NOVA SCOTIA INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM**

Have you ever wanted to ride to school in a big yellow bus? What about pretending to be a polar bear and taking a dip in the Atlantic Ocean on the first day of January? Have you ever had the sweet syrup from a Canadian maple tree on your pancakes?

Each year we welcome students from over 35 different countries. International students come to Nova Scotia to learn English and/or French and take credit courses. We have put together this handbook to give you an overview of the program.

# THE NOVA SCOTIA INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM

The NSISP is committed to creating global citizens by promoting the growth of intercultural understanding and increased international educational opportunities for Nova Scotian students and students from around the world.

You will receive a homestay letter outlining the homestay and school you will be attending. It is important to contact your host family before you arrive for the opportunity to learn about each other and prepare for your trip.

Prior to your arrival, you will also receive details on completing an online orientation through Vital English. It is called "Pre-Arrival Learning." We recommend you do this orientation as there are lots of wonderful tips and tricks included.

The NSISP has many program representatives that will support you. The most important is your Homestay Coordinator. If you have not already done so, please reach out to them before your arrival. They will be your first point of contact in a variety of situations.

You should contact to your Homestay Coordinator if you:

- have a question or problem arises you cannot solve on your own
- do not understand Canadian culture or something seems unusual to you at home, school, or in your community
- have trouble making friends or getting involved in extracurricular activities
- feel extreme homesickness
- have concerns or questions with school
- want to travel or have friends visiting

Your Homestay Coordinator is here to help you. If you have questions about your school or host family, you should talk with your Homestay Coordinator. The Homestay Coordinator will deal with any issues through mediation with students and host families. They will take any major issues

to the Program Manager/Director for help in finding a resolution.

## THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia is one of ten provinces and three territories in Canada and is situated on the northeast coast of the North American continent. Its estimated population is over 1,000,000.



Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Nova Scotia boasts more than 7,400 kilometres of coastline. In less than a day you can drive from one end of the province to the other and never be more than 56 kilometres from the ocean.

Nova Scotia is a multi-cultured province, like all provinces in Canada, and this diversity is found in our schools, homes, and communities. All people, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, economic background, sexual orientation, or gender deserve respect.

## CUSTOMS AND GREETINGS

A common greeting among Nova Scotian people is a firm handshake and Hello, how are you? Otherwise, a wave of the hand or nod of the head is an acceptable gesture when saying hello. Women may exchange hugs with each other or other male friends, while men typically pat each other on the back. French-speaking people might greet friends and relatives with a light kiss on the cheek.

When one passes a stranger on the street, a smile or a nod are appropriate. People use first names when addressing others in informal situations and eye contact is considered important during conversations and smiles are welcome.



## NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOLS

All schools in Nova Scotia follow the curriculum set by the provincial government.



Schools in Nova Scotia also have a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which differ depending on season. These activities usually take place after school and are a good way to meet friends. Students who are actively involved at the school and community level are happier and are more successful academically. Extra-curricular activities may include music, sports, arts, and clubs. In the fall, schools may offer Canadian football, soccer, baseball, cross country, golf, and volleyball. In the winter they may offer skiing, snowboarding, basketball, cheerleading, curling, hockey, and wrestling. In the spring there is: badminton, table tennis, track & field, softball, and rugby.

All high schools in Nova Scotia have student ambassadors. Your ambassador will contact you prior to arrival to introduce themselves and ensure you know at least one person before you arrive! They help you become familiar with the school and community and help create friendships with other students. The ambassadors also strive to make their school a more internationalized and welcoming environment.

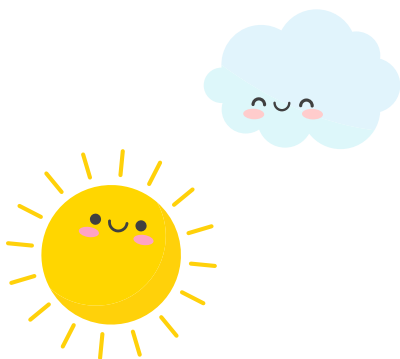
## NOVA SCOTIA ACTIVITIES

Nova Scotia, due to its changing seasons, offers a wide range of activities students and families can participate in throughout the year. During spring and summer months, people enjoy hiking, canoeing, sailing, river rafting, swimming, and water skiing. During the fall and winter months, some popular activities include soccer, skiing, snowboarding, curling, ice skating, hiking, and tobogganing. Year-round, students can participate in activities such as hockey games, basketball, concerts, theatre productions, and volunteer opportunities.



## NOVA SCOTIA WEATHER

Nova Scotia has a temperate climate with four distinct seasons. The seasons are winter, spring, summer, and fall. In winter, temperatures can fall as low as -20 degrees Celsius and in the summer, they go as high as 30 degrees Celsius.



## ARRIVING IN NOVA SCOTIA

Arrivals are a very exciting time in Nova Scotia! When booking your ticket please ensure it is within the timeframe set by the NSISP. Your agent/representative will have this information.

Once you arrive in Nova Scotia, you will be met by your host family or an NSISP program representative. However, for some students, especially those who are arriving on very late flights, you may have to spend the night at the airport hotel, at no charge, before departing to your host family. While we know this can be disappointing, there are always lots of NSISP team members around to help you. Our staff will connect you with your host family the next day. After gathering your luggage, it is time to leave the airport and head to your new home.



## NOVA SCOTIA FAMILIES

An important part of your participation in the NSISP is your homestay experience. The best way to learn English and Canadian culture is by being a member of a Canadian family.

Families in Nova Scotia are diverse; with the number of non-traditional host families increasing in recent years. Some host families have two parents with children, some have no children, and others have only one parent. All host families are carefully chosen and screened prior to their participation in the home stay program. We are very proud of the host families who are part of our Nova Scotia International Student Program as they are the ones who truly make your experience a successful one.

Be prepared to be part of your Nova Scotia family as they are participating in the program because they want to meet someone from another country. They will welcome you into their home and treat you as a regular family member. This means you will have the same responsibilities as every other member of the family. This will include contributing to the completion of household chores in shared common spaces and respecting the rules of your host family. In Nova Scotia most members of the household work outside the home; therefore, everyone typically pitches in at home. For example, this means when it snows - you should be shovel-ready.





Students new to Nova Scotia may find the food different from your home country and an adjustment period is normal. As you settle into life with your host family, it's important to understand some cultural norms around meals and food expectations. When you have questions, talk to your Host Family about expectations around food.

- Eating seasonally is common practice, meaning certain foods are purchased at different times of the year when they are freshest.
- Your host family will provide food for three balanced meals a day.
- Breakfast and lunch may be prepared by the student. A typical breakfast may include toast or cereal. A typical lunch may include sandwiches or leftovers.
- Typically, the largest meal of the day is referred to as "dinner" or "supper" and is served between 5-7 pm.
- You are encouraged to accompany your host to the grocery store to familiarize yourself with available options and be involved with meal planning, preparation, and clean up.
- It's important to respect household rules, such as no food in the bedroom.
- Some families like students to get involved in making meals together. It's a nice time to practice your English and be helpful. Please ask your family if there's anything you can do to help them prepare meals.
- Try new foods and immerse yourself in the cultural experience with your Host Family.
- Host families are not required to supply snacks but many do. Please be aware that purchasing your own snacks is something to discuss/consider.

All host families have their own rules in their home, like your parents at home. Be prepared to follow all family rules; this is part of the experience. You are encouraged to talk with your host family about any concerns or questions you may have. Similarly, you can also talk with your Homestay Coordinator, as this is an essential part of their role.

Further, all students have a right to essential privacy in their homestay; however, the host family at their discretion, reserves the right to enter any room within their home if needed. Host families also sign an agreement with our program which states students will not be left home alone overnight unsupervised.



## USE OF ELECTRONICS

Students are encouraged to bring their own personal technology. You may want to consider purchasing a SIM card and data service in Nova Scotia.

Students must adhere to the following standards for personal technology use in Nova Scotia:

- Respect the privacy, safety, and rights of each person
- Respect the teaching-learning environment according to the rules of the RCE/CSAP and school
- It is unacceptable to take, create, or distribute pictures, audio, or video without permission of ALL those being recorded. Making secret recordings or live streaming from within homes or schools is never acceptable and may be punishable by the law and/or dismissal from the NSISP.
- It is a criminal offence to participate or initiate acts of cyberbullying. By definition, cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. Participating in cyberbullying may be punishable by the law and and/or will result in dismissal from the NSISP.

## SPENDING MONEY

The NSISP recommends students open a local bank account. A Canadian debit card allows you to have quick access to your money. You will be responsible to pay for your own social activities (movies, restaurants, sporting events, etc.)

### Students are responsible for their own finances.

Nova Scotia has a 15% tax added on goods and services which is added at the checkout when it's time to pay for your items. It is standard in Nova Scotia to tip 15% for general services, for examples eating out a restaurant or getting your hair cut.

## STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Students may travel to and from school by the yellow school bus. There is no charge for the school bus. Some students will live close enough to walk to school. If you live in an area where public transportation is provided and choose to use this method for travel to and from school, the cost will be your responsibility.

When possible, your host families will provide transportation to facilitate your participation in program and extra-curricular activities. It is important to give as much notice as possible to your host family when you need a drive somewhere. Students are encouraged to share rides and carpool when you can.





## STUDENT TRAVEL WHILE IN NOVA SCOTIA

**Please note:** Student Travel is defined as travel that is not part of a school, RCE, or Nova Scotia International Student Program organized trip or event. **The RCE Director has the final decision on whether the student can travel.**

We recognize the value of students visiting other places in Canada. If the student plans to travel out of the province, without their host parents, they are to discuss the procedures and permissions with their Homestay Coordinator and Program Manager/Director.

### **Within the Maritimes** (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island)

Students must receive acknowledgement from their host family and consent of their custodian while in Canada, they can travel through the Maritimes with them, a student group, or other family.

### **Outside the Maritimes**

Students must obtain approval from the NSISP\* to travel outside the Maritimes. Travel outside the Maritimes must be chaperoned by a responsible adult (minimum age of 25) and requires written approval, in English, from the natural family. The NSISP must be advised at least two weeks prior to departure about the plan to travel.

*\*NSISP refers to the legal custodian of the student while in Canada*

Students are responsible for all costs incurred by the travel. **Students must fill out the NSISP travel form and submit it to the program manager and/or director for approval prior to booking flights or finalizing details.**

**Please note:** the renting of hotel rooms by an unaccompanied minor is illegal in Canada and this practice cannot be supported by the NSISP. As well, students cannot act as chaperones for other students.



## MEDICAL INSURANCE FOR STUDENTS

You receive medical coverage through Medavie Blue Cross. Insurance does not cover regular trips to the dentist. However, the insurance may cover the cost of the dentist if the visit is the result of an accident.

Information on insurance can be found on the website:  
[www.nsispinsurance.ca](http://www.nsispinsurance.ca).

- Illnesses like a cough, flu, sore throat do not typically require a visit to the doctor
- Your host family will help you decide if you need to see a doctor
- The next step is deciding on walk-in clinic vs hospital
- Walk-in clinics have shorter wait times and are better for non-emergencies. Please trust your host family as they will have your best interest at heart.

# CULTURE SHOCK AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Culture shock happens to all international students in varying degrees. At orientation NSISP representatives discuss culture shock and methods of dealing with the problem.

Four phases to be aware of:

**1. The Honeymoon**—students are excited about their new experiences and surroundings. Students will begin to associate Canada with their home country. They will also look for similarities between the two, and this helps them feel more comfortable.

**2. Shock**—students start to feel a little disorientated. They will start to notice the differences between Canadian living and home. At this point the student may feel the most homesick. Most students do not display strong symptoms however some may get sleepier or need more time alone away from the host family. Keep the lines of communication open during this time as the student may want to talk about their feelings.

**3. Recovery**—students feel more comfortable, relaxed and secure within their surroundings.

**4. Home free**—students are now members of the family. Students will begin to enjoy the differences of their new life. They will also display more confidence and feel at home with their host family.



## **FAMILY VISITS FROM HOME**

The NSISP recommends natural parents cannot visit for at least six weeks after your arrival; as visiting during the early weeks can be quite disruptive and stressful for your new host family as well as making it difficult for you to transition to a new culture, family, and school.

Should your natural parents decide to come to visit after six weeks, it is their responsibility to arrange their own accommodations and transportation.

If your natural family is asking to visit please discuss these requests with your Homestay Coordinator.



## EXTENDING YOUR VISA OR STUDY PERMIT

All student visas and study permits have an expiry date. Students must confirm by the given deadline if they are extending their studies. If you want to extend these documents, the NSISP has carefully selected an accredited immigration consultant who students can contract, for a fee, to help them apply for these renewals while studying in Canada. Your Homestay Coordinator will be able to put you in contact with this consultant.

This consultant is not an NSISP employee and the NSISP does not generate any profit from these services. Students are under no obligation to contract the consultant for these services. It is the responsibility of the students (their parents/agent) to decide when, or if, to use the consultant. The NSISP Central office is not involved in the process of renewing the study permits and visa renewals and should only be contacted if there is a problem with the service provided by the RCE/CSAP or the immigration consultant.





## RULES AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE NSISP

The signed NSISP agreement contains the rules of the program. When enrolling in the program, these terms were signed by me and my parents. Breaking the terms could result in the termination of my program.



While in Canada, I am always under the jurisdiction of the national, provincial, and local laws. I will obey all laws and refrain from illegal activity (shoplifting, stealing, harming others, using technology inappropriately, etc.)



I will not possess or purchase or consume alcohol, cannabis, or use illegal drugs while enrolled in the Nova Scotia International Student Program (NSISP).



I will obey the rules of my home stay and will make every effort to adjust to, and become a member of, the family and community. This includes any curfews, chores, and other rules they have established.



I will obey the rules of the school I attend. These rules include, but are not limited to, attendance and actively participating in classroom work and adhering to the standards for personal technology use as outlined in the NSISP student handbook. I agree to take part in extra-curricular activities.



I will make every effort to speak English at all times.



I will not drive motorized vehicles except within the context of a formal driver's training program. Driver's training may be taken only with the written permission of my parents and I will allow the NSISP to hold my driver's license until I return to my home country.



**Travel within the Maritime (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island)** — I understand with the acknowledgement of my host family and consent of my custodian while in Canada, I can travel throughout the Maritimes with them, a student group, or other family.



**Travel outside of the Maritimes** — I understand I require approval from the NSISP to travel outside the Maritimes. Travel outside the Maritimes must be chaperoned by a responsible adult (minimum age of 25) and requires written approval, in English, from my family. I will also advise the NSISP at least two weeks prior to my departure of my plans to travel.



I understand that my program fees cover my monthly charges for room, board, medical, and tuition. Some schools charge all their students an additional fee for such items as lockers, school agendas, etc. It is my responsibility to pay these fees.



6 weeks

I understand visits by my family or friends from my home country are permitted no sooner than six weeks after my arrival in Nova Scotia. If my family or friends visit, they are responsible to make arrangements for their lodging outside the home of my host family.



I recognize I will make a full academic effort and, as a student in the NSISP, any report about my participation (marks, behaviour etc.) can be sent to my parents and/or agent (if applicable).



I confirm information provided in this application is complete and factual, including any medical or dietary conditions relevant to my participation in the NSISP.



I consent to the use of my personal information for: (a) applying to the NSISP, (b) processing of my application, and (c) if I am accepted into the NSISP, use of my information by the Nova Scotia regional centre for education/Conseil scolaire acadien provincial and school where I will attend classes, as well as my host family.



I understand while enrolled in the NSISP a custodian will be assigned to me. The custodian can make decisions (ie, medical) on my behalf. The custodian will always use fair and reasonable judgment.



I understand personal identifying information about me including, but not limited to, name, grade, school, video/voice/ audio recording, images (photos), and my work may be used in print publications, online, and in social media (including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) for promotional purposes by the Nova Scotia International Student Program and my respective regional centre for education/Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.



I give permission to participate in newspapers/print publications, radio, and television media interviews. This permission may extend beyond my participation in the program and may be withdrawn by me, or my parent, with written notice.



I understand I should limit communication with my natural family and friends in my home country. This will help to ensure I enjoy a full cultural experience and stay engaged with the group. Upon arrival in the NSISP, I can contact my family and then it is recommended communication is limited to once a week.



I understand, once I am enrolled as an NSISP student, I remain in the NSISP for the duration of my studies in secondary school. I cannot return to the Program and live on my own or with a friend.





## PROGRAM TERMINATION

The NSISP reserves the right to terminate your participation for violation of program participation terms and/or when mental and/or physical health, as determined solely by the NSISP, is in jeopardy.

If a student's education or homestay needs are greater than disclosed in the application process, or change during the student's stay in the program, the NSISP has the right to terminate participation in the program and send the student home at their own expense.

## BREAKING THE NSISP RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

The NSISP has a three-stage process for managing behavioral discipline issues.

**Note:** you may automatically be placed to Stage 2 or 3 depending on the rule(s) broken

- **STAGE ONE** (Disruptive Behaviour) – verbal warning and written report to agent in home country to be forwarded to parents in home country.
- **STAGE TWO** (Severely Disruptive Behaviour or 2nd Disruptive Behaviours) – Written Behaviour Agreement and meeting with Program Director/Manager and school administrator, if applicable.
- **STAGE THREE** (Severely Disruptive Behaviour or illegal activity) – Student returned to home country.

## **GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

- Successful students give their families time, attention, and love. These attributes make the program a memorable experience for everyone involved.
- Be open to an inclusive and diverse experience.
- Maintain regular communication with your Homestay Coordinator. Be sure to talk to them any time you have questions or concerns.
- Attend school and complete required assignments and homework.
- Get involved in your school/community.
- Respect and follow the rules of your host family.
- Connect with your school liaison and student ambassador(s)
- Make friends at school and in the neighbourhood.



# FINAL MESSAGE

We are excited to  
greet you in Nova Scotia.

The staff of the  
Nova Scotia International  
Student Program  
hope you will have a  
successful experience.

See you at the airport!



Nova Scotia  
International  
Student  
Program

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