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Changes to open work permits for family members of temporary residents

Ottawa, January 14, 2025—The Government of Canada is continuing to strengthen the integrity and quality of our temporary resident programs while supporting the country's economic goals and labour market needs.

As part of the [broader measures announced](#) in September 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is changing open work permit (OWP) eligibility for family members of international students and foreign workers.

Effective January 21, 2025, only spouses of certain international students and foreign workers will be able to apply for a family OWP.

Family OWPs will be limited to spouses of international students who are enrolled in

- master's programs that are 16 months or longer
- doctoral programs, or
- [select professional and eligible programs](#)

Family OWPs will also be limited to spouses of foreign workers who are employed in

- [TEER](#) 0 or 1 occupations, or
- select TEER 2 or 3 occupations in sectors with labour shortages or linked to government priorities
 - These include occupations in the natural and applied sciences, construction, health care, natural resources, education, sports and military sectors. The full list will be available on January 21, 2025.

In addition, the foreign worker must also have at least 16 months remaining on their work permit at the time when their spouse applies for the OWP. Dependent children of foreign workers will no longer be eligible.

OWPs that were approved under the previous measures and have not expired will remain valid. In situations where students may need more time to complete their program or where family members received a shorter work permit than the principal applicant, in-Canada family members (including spouses and dependent children) can apply to renew their work permit as long as

- they are applying under the same criteria as the current work permit, and
- the requested duration of the renewal matches that of the existing study or work permit of the principal applicant

Spouses of workers covered by free-trade agreements and those transitioning to permanent residence will not be impacted by these changes. Family members who will no longer qualify for a family OWP can apply for any type of work permit they are eligible for under [Canada's work permit programs](#).

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