

## Spousal Open Work Permits (SOWP) in Canada

### Why in News?

*Canada's Spousal Open Work Permit policy has been updated, allowing spouses of international students to apply for work permits while studying.*

- SOWP program provide opportunities for their **spouses** to apply for an open work permit.
- Thus, spouses have the opportunity to **work full-time** for the duration of their partner's study in Canada.
- Students who meet the eligibility criteria set by *Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)* can apply for a spousal visa.
- **Eligible academic programs**
  - PhD programs
  - Master's degree programs (with a minimum duration of 16 months) and
  - professional courses like Doctor of Dental Surgery,
  - Bachelor of Law (LLB),
  - Pharmacy (B. Pharmacy, PharmD),
  - Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM),
  - Doctor of Medicine (MD),
  - Bachelor of Nursing (BN),
  - Bachelor of Engineering (BEng),
  - Doctor of Optometry (OD),
  - BSE Pharmacy,
  - Bachelor of Education (BEEd).
- **Recent Changes** - International students can now apply for a SOWP alongside their study permit application.
- If the student is already studying in Canada, their spouse can apply for an open work permit if their spouse is still in their home country.
- If the duration of the work permit is set to expire before the study period, they can apply for an extension to match the remaining duration of the study period.
- Once a student completes their studies in Canada, they may be eligible to apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which allows graduates to work in Canada for **up to 3 years**, depending on the length of their program.
- In such cases, the spouse may also be eligible for an open work permit under specific conditions.
- The spouse's eligibility depends on whether the student on PGWP is employed in certain sectors under Canada's Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibilities (TEER) system.
- Specifically TEER 0 or 1 occupations and in TEER 2 or 3 occupations sectors they should choose jobs with labour shortages or those linked to government priorities.
- E.g., Natural sciences, healthcare, construction, education, etc.
- For students who are not eligible under these specific programs, their spouse has a few other options.
- The spouse can apply separately for a study permit or a visitor visa and they need to show strong financial proof to prove they can meet the living expenses in Canada.

## Reference

[The Indian Express | Spousal Open Work Permits \(SOWP\)](#)

