

Canadian Foreign Affairs, Trade and International Affair Department

International Education: A Key Driver of Canada's Future Prosperity



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Chapter 5: Targets for Success

5.1 International student enrollment

Under our mandate to make recommendations on a strategy that will reinforce Canada as a country of choice to study and conduct world-class research, one of the areas we looked at during our deliberations was international student enrollment. As described previously, the provinces/territories have identified a greater number of international students in Canada as one of the expected outcomes of their international education marketing action plan. Throughout our engagement with the education field, we consistently heard that one of the overarching objectives for the international education strategy should be to position Canada as a leading destination for international students and researchers.

It was often repeated that Canada has the potential to support growing international student enrollment, and that the strategy should have a specific goal or target for this increased recruitment. However, the challenge lies in identifying a target for growth in international enrollment that will allow Canada to seize emerging opportunities while maintaining the quality of our education offering and the integrity of our visa system. We strongly believe that such a target should not aim for growth for the sake of growth, but should instead focus on a sustained, manageable growth that supports Canada's reputation for quality and excellence. Thus, most importantly, this target should focus on attracting the highest calibre of international students and researchers to Canada.

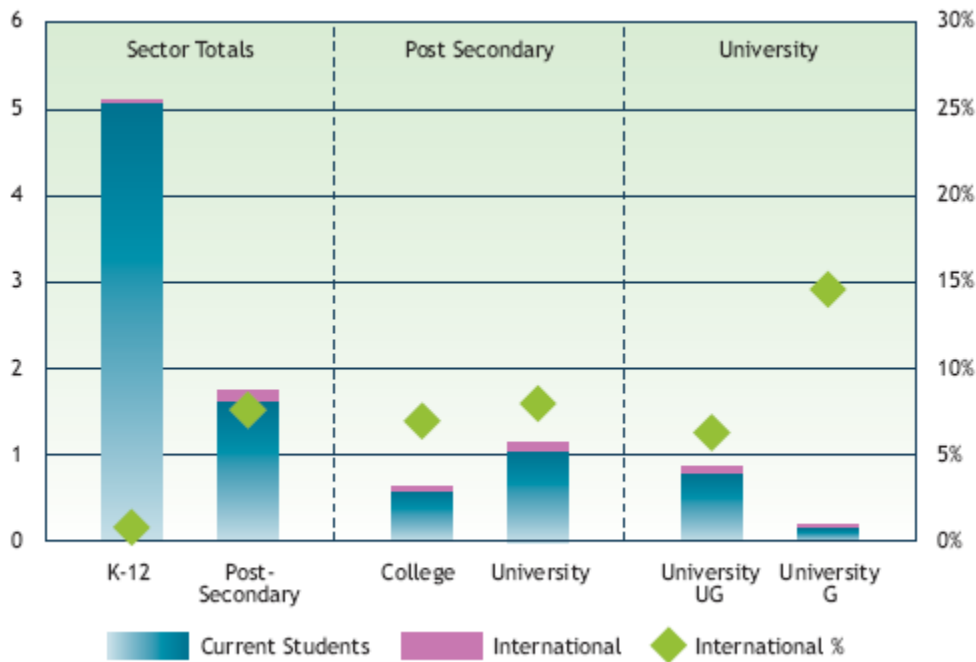
In order for us to better understand Canada's potential for future growth, a study was commissioned to assess Canada's capacity to absorb international students. It was critical for us to ensure that efforts to attract greater numbers of international students do not interfere with opportunities for Canadians to pursue a post-secondary education within Canada.

Looking at current enrollment and capacity levels, the study—Canada's Capacity for International Student Enrollment—showed that international students comprise 0.7 percent of total K-12 enrollment and 7.5 percent of post-secondary enrollment across Canada.⁶⁶ The capacity study further suggested that Canada's share of international students in post-secondary education is relatively modest compared to competitor countries such as France (12.0 percent), Germany (11.5 percent) and especially Australia (23.2 percent).⁶⁷

Canada has already experienced strong growth rates for international student enrollment over the past several years. Since 2007, the number of international students in Canada has grown by 36 percent to more than 239,000 today. This growth dynamic has accelerated since 2008, with year-over-year growth rates reaching 10.2 percent in 2009 and 11.3 percent in 2010.⁶⁸ These rates demonstrate the level of priority of internationalization of Canada's education field. According to the OECD, Canada's market share of international students was at 5.2 percent in 2009. All things being equal, we project that Canada's market share should remain the same, given that the overall market is also expected to roughly double over this time frame.

2009 domestic and international enrollment in Canada (millions)

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Source: Illuminate Consulting Group. Canada's Capacity for International Student Enrollment.

Notes: the left axis measures enrollment in millions. The right axis measures the ratio of international to total enrollment as a percentage. Total K-12 data (Statistics Canada) only includes public schools, while international K-12 data (CIC) includes all schools. Data from: Statistics Canada, Statistics Canada's Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS), and CIC.

The capacity study projected increases in domestic and international post-secondary enrollment levels in Canada under conditions including a high-growth scenario, wherein international enrollments would grow at a rate of 10.0 percent year over year. The report showed that under this scenario, international students would account for 17.3 percent of total post-secondary enrollment in Canada by 2020.⁶⁹

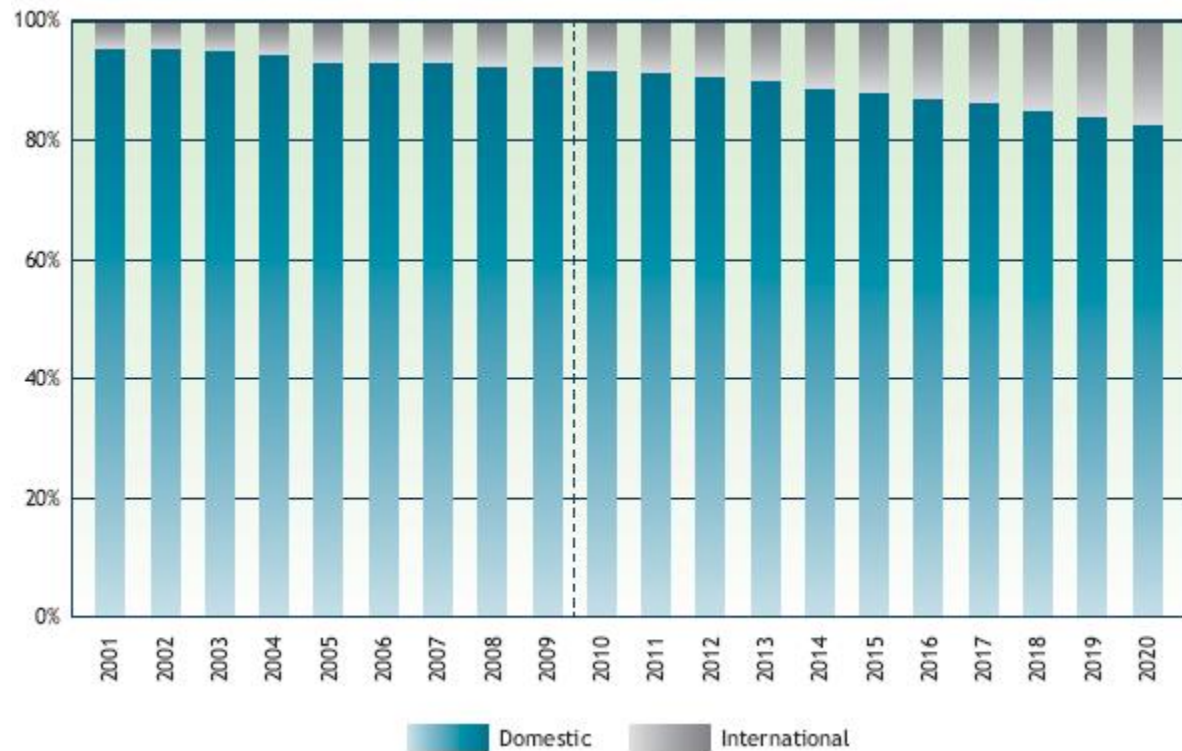
Overall, the study concluded that Canada currently has no notable capacity issues with respect to enrolling additional international students, and at the national level will not face any capacity issue well into the near future. The study also noted differences in enrollment levels between different provinces/territories and between different education subsectors, suggesting that this allows for sustained growth opportunities in some smaller provinces and at the K-12 level.

In light of these findings and the information we learned from institutions and provinces/territories about their experience of growth in international student enrollments, we sought to identify a target that would allow Canada to be ambitious in its recruitment of international students and researchers while balancing the need to maintain quality and to respect provincial/territorial jurisdiction over education (including seat funding mechanisms and the prerogative to set individual targets or caps for international enrollment).

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Domestic and international PSE in Canada high growth scenario

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Source: Illuminate Consulting Group, Canada's Capacity for International Student Enrollment.

Notes: PSE = Post-secondary enrollment. The dotted line marks the start of projections. The scenario is based on an international enrollment growth rate of 10.0 percent and a domestic enrollment growth rate of 1.0 percent, which is equal to its average over the last five years.

Data from Statistics Canada's PSIS.

Note: "International students" vs. "Foreign students"

When evaluating capacity for international enrollment, it is necessary to note the important distinction between "international students" and "foreign students". As defined by the OECD in Education at a Glance 2011:

- *Students are classified as "international" if they left their country of origin and moved to another country to study.*

- *New permanent residents are sometimes classified as "foreign students" as they are not citizens of the country in which they are studying (for example, young people from immigrant families).*

Canada's capacity study identifies the combined population of international students and landed immigrant/ permanent resident students (i.e. The "foreign student" population) in Canada as an emerging policy issue, considering the potential for issues affecting this broader group of students including academic preparation, language skills and undifferentiated public perceptions regarding the impact of these students on local communities. The study further adds that these issues are particularly salient in major metropolitan areas with large immigrant populations.

Recommendation 1: Double the number of international students choosing Canada by 2022

Canada's International Education Strategy should seek to double the number of full-time international students, from 239,131 in 2011 to more than 450,000 by 2022. We consider this to be a realistic goal given our assessment of the growth trends in international education, and Canada's ability to sustain quality. Canada's education systems have the capacity to absorb new international students without displacing domestic students.

The way forward: We have calculated that this target can be achieved by increasing international student enrollment at a rate of 7 percent year over year. This is an overarching target that encourages provinces/territories and institutions to assess their individual capacities and pursue the opportunities for growth that they are able to support based on their strengths and priorities. Furthermore, we propose that this objective be applied to international student enrollment across the board, not only at the post-secondary education level. There is potential for K-12 and language schools to grow their international student enrollment and provide a strong foundation for pathways through education in Canada. We firmly believe that our target will allow Canada to enrol international students at a sustainable pace that ensures we continue to attract and accept only the highest quality of applicants from around the world.

We are confident that this target for growth will also enable Canada's visa processing systems to capably address increasing volumes of international applications to Canada, thereby safeguarding the quality of our education offerings and the integrity of our visa processes, and ensuring that we continue to be a leading destination for the world's best and brightest students and researchers.

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5.2 International mobility for Canadian students

"In the higher education context, internationalization is understood as the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension to the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university."⁷⁰

Internationalization includes several components:

- internationalizing the curriculum (including international views, perspectives or approaches within courses);
- exporting Canadian knowledge services (via partnership agreements, offering joint programs or campuses abroad);
- engaging in international research collaboration;

- recruiting international students to Canadian campuses; and
- encouraging Canadian students to study abroad, carry out an internship abroad or participate in a service learning experience.

Institutions can participate in some or all of these components, depending on their institutional strengths and priorities. Some have a centralized approach or strategy to guide their internationalization efforts while others allow for a bottom-up approach whereby faculty lead the process (or there are a variety of approaches based on the different faculties).⁷¹ The overall goal is to ensure that students have the intercultural and language skills to become leaders in the global knowledge economy—that they become “global citizens”.

Throughout our engagement, we found that most Canadian institutions view internationalization as a top priority. Internationalization of Canadian institutions is supported by faculty exchange programs, which enable Canadian faculty and staff to cultivate best practices from international pedagogies, form relationships with foreign institutions (which can lead to academic and research partnerships) and reflect Canada’s quality education offering on the global stage. International experiences for Canadian students enable them to learn from diverse perspectives, immerse themselves in different cultural practices, and learn foreign languages required to conduct business globally.



Université Laval: Preparing students for the global market through international exchange

As part of its vision for internationalizing education and acquiring intercultural skills, student mobility is a component of programs at the Université Laval. To this end, the Profil international program allows students to study abroad for one or two terms, and Stage interculturel et international (SII) offers the possibility of interning in an emerging country. Scholarships for study abroad are available to students who meet certain criteria (language skills, credits earned, GPA).

During the 2010–11 academic year, participants in Profil international and SII received more than \$2.8 million in scholarships. Benefiting from the university’s vast network of international agreements (475 partners in 67 countries), 911 Laval students are having the opportunity to gain international experience in all four corners of the world this year.



Université Laval student Jennifer Hamel in Guatemala. Photo courtesy of the Université Laval.

According to Nicole Lacasse, Vice-Rector, Academic and International Activities: "Our students have to be prepared to evolve in a highly competitive global market. In the global knowledge economy, university graduates should be on the cutting edge of knowledge, but also be capable of working in many languages and in different cultural environments. For the Université Laval, training skilled people today means integrating an international dimension into our programs with possibilities to study or intern.

Canada lags behind competitor countries in international mobility for domestic students. Approximately 3 percent of Canadian university students go abroad as part of study/work programs (compared to 3.5 percent of American students, 5 percent of European students, and 6 percent of Australian students), whereas approximately 1.5 percent of Canadian college students study/work abroad.^x Study/work abroad programs provide opportunities for Canadian students to experience different cultures and societies and become global citizens—and to serve as ambassadors for education in Canada, thus playing an important role in marketing Canada as an education destination. Canadian students with experience abroad will also be in a better position to contribute to Canada's future international trade efforts and prosperity. Canadian students abroad also act as ambassadors for Canada to the world, sharing Canadian values with their peers, and upon their return, they contribute to the development of a more worldly Canadian society.

It is worth noting here that HRSDC's mandate toward labour market and skills development emphasizes a comprehensive approach beyond recruitment, including service exports, two-way flows of students and international institutional partnerships. This approach included the administration of the International Academic Mobility (IAM) Initiative, which provided funding for student mobility and academic co-operation projects between Canadian post-secondary institutions and institutions in foreign partnering countries. In June 2011, HRSDC announced that as a result of a program review, the IAM initiative will no longer be funded by the Government of Canada after March 31, 2015. There have been no new federal funding allocations for undergraduate students for international mobility since the cancellation of the IAM initiative in June 2011.

Recommendation 2: Introduce an International Mobility Program for Canadian Students to serve 50,000 students per year by 2022

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In order to fully realize the multi-faceted aspirational goals of internationalization, Canada should consider co-funding, with academic institutions and/or provincial/territorial governments, a major student mobility program to create opportunities for 50,000 Canadian students per year to go abroad for study and cultural exchanges, service learning and other experiential learning activities by 2022. It is anticipated that this investment will be matched by institutions and/or provinces/territories and private donors by a 2:1 ratio. This opportunity would be available across the sector (K-12 through post-secondary institutions).

It is essential that institutions also continue to provide opportunities for faculty exchange and research partnerships with foreign institutions.

Further, we acknowledge that Canadian students are powerful ambassadors who can market opportunities to study in Canada to their fellow students abroad.

