
Developing Ontario's International Postsecondary Education Strategy

*A discussion paper to support consultations
with Ontario Universities and Colleges*



Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development

July 11, 2017

Ontario's colleges and universities are leading the way in attracting international students and creating long-lasting international partnerships. This important activity fosters the talent and skills required to meet the needs of the modern economy while driving economic activity.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development is looking to work with our post-secondary partners to build on that success by developing a comprehensive international post-secondary education strategy that incorporates domestic and international activity and answers the Premier's call to "bring focus to efforts to attract international students to Ontario."

Ontario has become a preferred destination for international postsecondary education. Our colleges and universities continue to build their reputations at home and abroad, and create numerous opportunities for international partnerships. International enrolment continues to increase, and we are seeing the demand for an Ontario credential grow around the globe. At the same time, domestic students are seeing the value of international opportunities to study abroad.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development is looking to work with our partners to shape a strategy that will better leverage these opportunities in ways that will continue to expand the benefits to all students, institutions, and the province overall.

This paper builds on discussions to date between the government and the sector on how to support internationalization at Ontario's colleges and universities. As we move towards final planning, we are coming back to our partners to fine tune our thoughts around some key questions. What we learn will help to guide Ontario's vision for international postsecondary education so that broad and robust benefits can be best achieved.

International Postsecondary Education

International education includes the following key activities:

- ◆ student mobility (both recruiting international students to come to Ontario and supporting Ontario students who want to study abroad);
- ◆ cross-cultural learning, which is enhanced as campuses internationalize;
- ◆ development of faculty research partnerships and networks; and
- ◆ off-shore campuses.

Amid growing international competition, Ontario is doing well. Our international student enrolment has increased steadily over the past decade:

- ◆ Ontario draws the largest number of international students in Canada. The number of international students studying at Ontario's publicly-assisted colleges and universities in 2016-17 was approximately 100,000.
 - By comparison, California, which has a total population of approximately 39 million, nearly three times Ontario's, and is the state that draws the largest number of international students in the United States, hosted approximately 190,000 international students as of July 2016.
- ◆ International enrolments in Ontario have increased over 160% since 2009. International students now make up approximately 15% of all postsecondary students. (See Appendix A for the range, by institution.) This 15% proportion is slightly more than the 12.6% proportion in California, though less than the 20% proportion in British Columbia.
- ◆ If current trends continue, international students will account for approximately 20% of all postsecondary students in Ontario by 2022. By comparison, over 20% of postsecondary students in Australia and over 15% of those in the United Kingdom were international as of 2010.

Benefits to Ontario

International education stands to play an increasingly important role as an economic driver for Ontario's economy. In 2014, international students contributed approximately \$5.2 billion to the province's economy. In some cases, international students may become permanent residents and support Ontario's highly-skilled workforce.

We recognize that many of Ontario's postsecondary institutions have a long history of welcoming students from around the world, and sending their

students to other parts of the world to further their studies. For postsecondary education, broad benefits come from this internationalization:

- ◆ International students bring a new vibrancy to campuses, and enrich the classroom experience for domestic students by offering diverse perspectives.
- ◆ For Ontario students who choose to do part of their studies in another country the experience further broadens their education and may make them more marketable to employers.
- ◆ Institutional research and program ties with global partners deepen academic networks and enhance the reputations of Ontario's institutions.

Ontario's first International PSE Strategy will focus on student-centred policy initiatives that support viable and sustainable international growth for institutions and Ontario's broader economic goals. Its core principles will be: sustainable and supported international student growth for institutions; transparency, fairness and support for students; and stewardship of Ontario's global reputation.

What We've Heard

In Spring 2016, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development hosted focus groups and roundtable consultations with Parliamentary Assistant Han Dong, and invited written submissions on international education. The consultation focused on how the experience of all students could be further enhanced while also strengthening postsecondary education and Ontario's economy broadly.

Analysis of the consultation results confirms the complexity of the issues. The ministry continued to explore these further over the past year by engaging sector partners in additional discussions, including in the context of developing the new Strategic Mandate Agreements.

What emerged from this range of activities are the following key takeaways:

- ◆ Institutions want to continue to increase international enrolment.
- ◆ International students want transparency and support from the institutions they attend.
- ◆ Students and institutions would like clearer immigration pathways for international students, both in preparation for enrolment and to gain residency status or citizenship after graduation.
- ◆ Domestic students and institutions want more support for opportunities to study and gain experience abroad.
- ◆ Making Ontario an overall attractive destination (provincial branding), with a sustained reputation for excellence in postsecondary education, supports all institutions' recruitment efforts.

This input from students and the sector has informed the ministry's deliberations on the opportunities and challenges for international education in Ontario's postsecondary education sector. Before finalizing a plan, however, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development is interested to hear more from colleges and universities about some key system-wide opportunities and challenges that were identified in the work to date. While there was a great deal of consensus around many of the core issues, others warrant further discussion with the sector. This will help us to ensure that the actions we take will focus on students, will advance Ontario's economic interests, and will support the system's overall sustainability and the strong reputation the sector has built.

Questions and additional information in the following sections will be used to guide discussion between PA Han Dong and representatives from the sector on July 11, 2017. The ministry also welcomes comments in writing. Please send them to the attention of Daniel H. McKeown at daniel.h.mckeown@ontario.ca by August 8, 2017.

■ Focus on International Students

Ontario is an attractive destination for international students in large part because our postsecondary institutions have a world-class reputation based on the quality of their programs and supports. They deliver top-quality education, opening avenues of opportunity for students and graduates. They provide a range of supports that welcome international students and help them to get the most out of the time they spend studying and living in Ontario.

The growth of international enrolment in Ontario is evidence of the work that has been done by our colleges and universities. Our goal now is to look for ways that we can derive the greatest benefits, and mitigate any risks, as we build further on this strong foundation.

■ Discussion Questions

1. In your experience, what are the key things that maintain and enhance **Ontario's reputation** – rather than any individual institution's – **as a high-quality destination for international students?**
2. Of the **student supports** that you offer, or would like to offer, to international students, which ones do you find to be most crucial? If funding was available, how would institutions apply this to student supports?
3. Postsecondary institutions individually determine **international student tuition** in the context of the global marketplace. Students have voiced concerns, however, about unanticipated tuition increases happening mid-way through their programs. How could we address this issue of transparency together, so that international students and their families will have the information they need, up front, to make sound financial decisions?
4. What **reasonable expectations** should all international students who come to Ontario be able to have with respect to the terms of their study and campus experience?

■ The Benefits of Internationalization for Domestic Students

Students and institutions have emphasized the importance of creating and supporting opportunities for domestic students to study abroad and also to gain international work experience. The new perspectives, language skills, and intercultural competencies that students acquire help them in many ways, from generating new interests to making them more attractive to employers. Many universities and colleges currently offer study-abroad opportunities. As well, many sponsor campus events, activities, and programs that support students' development of global knowledge and perspectives.

The new International Postsecondary Education Strategy seeks to build on these benefits for domestic students.

■ Discussion Questions

5. What type of **study abroad programs** do you currently have? What type of **work-experience abroad programs** do you currently have? What works well? What doesn't work so well? How could the government support this important activity?
6. In what other ways could **internationalization of campuses** be used to benefit domestic students?

■ Focus on Growing Numbers and Recruitment Challenges

Although international students now study at every college and university in the province, the highest concentration is at institutions in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This means that some postsecondary institutions that are already experiencing enrolment pressures are also in the communities most attractive to international students. Meanwhile, some postsecondary institutions outside the GTA, including some in rural and northern Ontario, are experiencing declining enrolments and have unused capacity to accept larger numbers of international students. See Appendix A for the range, per institution.

■ Discussion Questions

7. Do you see a role for government in **helping institutions outside the GTA attract and retain students?**
8. Should there be an upper limit on the **size or percentage of the international student population?** For example, California recently introduced legislation mandating the 9 University of California (UC) system institutions that provide undergraduate education to have no more than 18% of students come from out of state (with those currently above that level grandfathered in and prohibited from further growth). The remaining 23 universities and 117 colleges that are publicly assisted in California did not have restrictions applied. Would something similar make sense in Ontario?
9. How can the ministry ensure that institutions are **managing risk appropriately**, and what is the appropriate role of the ministry if risks are too high?

Colleges Ontario and the Council of Ontario Universities are arranging working groups to participate in the July 11, 2017, discussion between PA Han Dong and representatives from the sector. The ministry also welcomes comments in writing. Please send them to the attention of Daniel H. McKeown at daniel.h.mckeown@ontario.ca by August 8, 2017.

Appendix A: International Students in Ontario Postsecondary Institutions, 2016-17

Percent of students who are international, 2016-17	Colleges ¹	Universities ²
0 – 4.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boréal • Loyalist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guelph • Nipissing • Ryerson
5 – 9.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algonquin • Durham • La Cité • Sault • Sir Sanford Fleming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laurentian • Trent • Ontario Institute of Technology • Wilfrid Laurier
10 – 19.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confederation • Conestoga • Fanshawe • Georgian • George Brown • Humber • Mohawk • St. Clair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brock • Carleton • Lakehead • McMaster • OCAD • Ottawa • Queen’s • Western • Windsor • York
20 – 29.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niagara • Seneca • Sheridan • St. Lawrence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algoma • Toronto • Waterloo
30% - 39.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambrian • Canadore • Northern 	
40% and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial • Lambton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearst

Sources:

Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, enrolment data from USER and CSER databases.

Notes:

1. College data are headcounts, and include colleges’ self reports on international students enrolled in programs with private partnerships.
2. University data are headcounts that roll together all undergraduate and graduate international students.