

# ALBERTA'S INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY



**A Post-Secondary Approach to Attracting and Developing Global Talent**

February 2020

*Alberta* 

**Alberta's International Education Strategy**

Ministry of Advanced Education, Government of Alberta

Date of publication: February 2020

ISBN# ISBN 978-1-4601-4722-1

© 2020 Government of Alberta

This document is available online at:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460147221>

This document is made available under the Open Government

Licence – Alberta (<https://open.alberta.ca/licence>).

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Setting the Direction for Alberta .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Key Priority Areas .....	5
Core Service Functions .....	6
<b>What is International Education? .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Why is International Education Important?.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Benefits of International Education .....	8
<b>The Alberta Advantage .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Opportunities and Challenges .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Key Priority Area 1: Global Talent Attraction .....	12
1.1. International promotion and brand recognition .....	12
1.2. Strategic and diversified approach to talent attraction .....	13
1.3. Labour market integration .....	13
Key Priority Area 2: Smart and Sustainable Growth.....	14
2.1. Institutional capacity for growth .....	14
2.2. Enabling policy environment .....	15
2.3. Commitment to quality assurance and resilience .....	15
Key Priority Area 3: International Skills Needed to Succeed.....	17
3.1. Awareness of and access to education abroad opportunities .....	17
3.2. System-wide collaboration for greater impact.....	17
3.3. Alignment with long-term economic and diplomatic priorities .....	18
<b>Goals and Key Actions .....</b>	<b>19</b>
PRIORITY 1: Global Talent Attraction.....	19
PRIORITY 2: Smart and Sustainable Growth .....	21
PRIORITY 3: International Skills Needed to Succeed .....	23
<b>Measuring Success.....</b>	<b>25</b>

# Introduction

For decades, Alberta benefited from a positive investment climate and strong economy. The province's low tax rates, streamlined regulations, and abundance of natural resources promoted foreign investment and regional development. As we look to the future and the decades to come, it is clear that a comprehensive and diversified approach to economic growth will be required to regain the competitive edge that made Alberta one of the most prosperous jurisdictions in the world.

Talent, not capital, will be the key factor linking innovation, competitiveness and growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

– *The Human Capital Report 2015, World Economic Forum*

Increasingly, prosperity and growth depend on how well a jurisdiction encourages and supports the mobility of talent, skills, ideas, and innovations across international borders. Alberta's post-secondary institutions play a key role in attracting and developing the talent and skills Alberta needs now and in the future. The best and brightest students will help to grow Alberta's competitiveness, lead the province across new technological frontiers, and become the next wave of entrepreneurs, innovators, researchers, tradespeople, and leaders. International education is a critical component to this mission. In short, Alberta benefits from international education through:

- a talented workforce made stronger by international students graduating with Alberta credentials and strong English language skills, some of whom will start businesses, invest in Alberta communities, and create jobs across the province;
- advancements in research and innovation made possible by important contributions from international students and academics pursuing studies at Alberta colleges, polytechnics, and universities;
- international partnerships to grow Alberta's expertise and opportunities to export educational products and services abroad, contributing to a greater revenue mix; and
- graduates who have the global experience, competencies, skills, and networks to improve the competitiveness of Alberta companies and help them grow beyond Alberta.

With these benefits in mind, *Alberta's International Education Strategy: A Post-Secondary Approach to Attracting and Developing Global Talent* was developed in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure the province has a pipeline of global talent to support the provincial economy for decades to come.

# Setting the Direction for Alberta

At its core, *Alberta's International Education Strategy* is a blueprint for attracting and developing global talent, thereby providing Alberta with the skills, ideas, and global networks it needs to grow and to create more jobs for Albertans. To reach this goal, the Government of Alberta will focus on advancing three key priority areas:

## Key Priority Areas

**1. GLOBAL TALENT ATTRACTION** – Alberta will attract talented international students to Alberta's post-secondary institutions and communities by:

- enhancing international recognition of Alberta's brand and quality post-secondary system;
- diversifying talent attraction efforts to target new source countries and supporting smaller and rural institutions; and
- aligning talent attraction with Alberta's labour market needs and research and innovation priorities.

**2. SMART AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH** – Alberta's post-secondary system will remain strong and innovative through an informed and balanced approach to international growth by:

- establishing appropriate targets for growth informed by institutions' capacity;
- supporting institutions to expand academic programs for prospective students and to grow educational exports to an expanding network of international clients; and
- strengthening system-wide quality assurance and resiliency through strategic foresight and risk-management.

**3. INTERNATIONAL SKILLS NEEDED TO SUCCEED** – Alberta will equip learners with the international skills and competencies they need to succeed in the global economy by:

- communicating publicly the value, importance, and availability of international learning opportunities, at home and abroad;
- supporting collaboration between institutions on education abroad to expand participation and to increase the impact of new and existing programs; and
- leveraging international learning opportunities to advance provincial priorities for research, economic growth, and diplomatic partnerships.

With these priorities established, the Government of Alberta will undertake a series of cost-effective measures to renew Alberta's approach to international education. Key actions are outlined starting on page 19 and reflect government's five core service functions supporting Alberta's international education sector.

## Core Service Functions



### **Talent attraction and global marketing**

- Leading trade and recruitment missions, developing promotional activities and materials, and branding Alberta's adult learning system for international audiences.



### **Capacity building and system coordination**

- Facilitating system-wide collaboration on international activities, supporting training and expertise development, and delivering targeted grant programs.



### **Diplomacy and international partnerships**

- Building and strengthening relationships, negotiating intergovernmental agreements, familiarizing visiting delegations with Alberta's post-secondary offerings, and connecting prospective partners or clients with Alberta learning institutions.



### **Policy direction and quality assurance**

- Setting the policy direction for Alberta's international education sector; developing guidelines, metrics, and best practices; and ensuring institutional compliance.



### **Research, data, and communications**

- Collecting and analyzing system data to inform decision making and enhancing awareness of the benefits of international education.

# What is International Education?

International education involves a suite of activities that enable government to achieve national and provincial priorities. These activities help to build a diverse and skilled workforce, support economic growth and trade, and advance research and innovation. Through international education, government can foster a post-secondary environment that attracts and develops global talent and enables talent to flourish.

International education activities take many forms, including:

- **Education Abroad:**

International exchanges and other opportunities for Alberta learners to study, research, work, and volunteer abroad, as part of completing an academic program.

- **Internationalization at Home:**

Activities to promote international perspectives in teaching, learning, and research which do not require Alberta students to travel outside their home institution, province, or country.

- **Talent Attraction:**

Recruiting international students, scholars, and researchers to Alberta post-secondary institutions and enabling them to contribute to a range of academic, social, and economic benefits to Alberta.

- **International Partnerships:**

Collaborative agreements between governments or between learning institutions and global partners to advance academics, research, and innovation.

- **Educational Exports:**

Marketing Alberta's post-secondary education model, curriculum, and expertise around the world (e.g. educational consulting, offshore campuses, joint credentials, development projects, language and skills training for corporate clients, and building capacity in emerging countries).

When implemented properly, international education promotes a rich exchange of ideas and encourages participants to develop important international competencies and skills (e.g. global awareness, cross-cultural communication, collaboration, and problem solving). Increasingly, graduates need these skills and competencies to thrive in Alberta's diverse communities and globalized workplaces.

Global learning is a vital instrument to achieve national priorities, including economic growth and trade, social and economic inclusion, and... influence in the world.

—Global Education for Canadians:  
*Equipping Young Canadians to Succeed at Home & Abroad.*

# Why is International Education Important?

Governments and education providers around the world continue to prioritize the internationalization of post-secondary education. The rationale for engaging in international education is clear when considering the broad benefits.

## Benefits of International Education

### Economic growth, job creation, and diversification:

Studies on the economic value of international education outline the positive direct and indirect impacts. In 2016, 30,342 international students (including students enrolled in both K-12 and post-secondary) spent over \$823 million in Alberta on tuition, accommodation, and discretionary spending. This economic activity supported over 10,000 jobs in Alberta's labour market.<sup>ii</sup>

Post-secondary institutions generate additional revenue by exporting education services to corporate, international, and multi-national clients. Capitalizing on their homegrown talent, programs, and expertise, Alberta post-secondary institutions are offering customized training to corporate clients, contributing to international development projects, establishing campuses abroad, selling curriculum, and developing joint programming with international partners.

International education helps Alberta achieve other economic priorities by encouraging economic diversification, facilitating trade and investment attraction, and expanding market access for exporting Alberta goods and services. Alumni from Alberta institutions become an ever-expanding network of ambassadors for the province and potential business partners in the future.

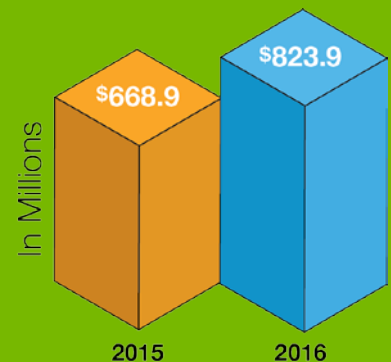
### Skilled, entrepreneurial, and diverse workforce:

Jurisdictions around the world recognize that attracting international talent can help to address challenges caused by changing demographics. The long-term global trend of rising life expectancy and declining fertility rates could mean a general decline in youth and working populations.<sup>iii</sup>

International talent mobility is crucial to supplement forecasted labour needs and to advance priority sectors and industries. As countries face shortages of skilled workers, investors and entrepreneurs routinely assess a region's talent pool as a benchmark for new investment. Silicon Valley is a prime example. Known for creating

In 2016, international students' spending contributed a total of \$15.5 billion to the Canadian economy (through tuition, rent, and discretionary expenses). In Alberta alone, international students contributed approximately \$823.9 million in 2016, up from \$668.9 million in 2015.

– *Economic Impact of International Education in Canada – 2017 Update*



– *International student spending in Alberta, 2015-16.*



thousands of jobs and adding billions of dollars to the American economy, the founders of technology companies have zoned in on communities with diversified, skilled, and mobile workforces.

International students attending Alberta learning institutions represent potential skilled talent for the province. With strong English language skills and several years of experience living and working in Canada, international graduates can start new businesses, contribute new skills and ideas, and help create the regional diversity that attracts companies and investors.

### **Advancements in research and innovation:**

A successful research and innovation system fosters collaboration by bringing together Alberta scholars with peers from across the country and around the world to tackle complex and interrelated challenges.

In 2019, almost a quarter (24.5%) of all graduate and doctoral students in the province were international students. The significant, positive impact of international students is felt most in key programs, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), where international students represent nearly half (48%) of graduate level learners. Every day, international talent is helping Alberta solve challenges in healthcare, artificial intelligence and robotics, clean technology, agriculture and other new and emerging fields. The ongoing contributions of international students, faculty, and researchers are essential for Alberta to achieve its research priorities, as outlined in the Alberta Research and Innovation Framework.<sup>iv</sup>

Many of Alberta's post-secondary institutions attract international students and researchers by partnering with international institutions and establishing research offices abroad. Through the Mitacs Globalink internship program, Alberta welcomes more than 100 top international students each year who work alongside local researchers at Alberta universities to advance research in priority fields of study.

*"I was a Mitacs intern at the University of Calgary in 2018 and am currently pursuing a Masters in the same University. I have a keen interest in research, particularly neuroscience and the internship helped me obtain a wholesome research experience, something which I felt is usually difficult to obtain at the undergraduate level. I realized how research intensive most Canadian Universities are, and hence, I decided to return to Canada for my Masters. I have an interest in neuro-developmental biology, and am thinking of pursuing a PhD in the same field."*

*– Shreeya Kedia , Mitacs Globalink Research Intern, University of Calgary - Undergraduate internship program, 2018, Mitacs Globalink Graduate Fellow, University of Calgary – Returned in 2019 to study for MSc in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.*

### **Better prepared graduates and future leaders:**

Studies indicate higher academic scores, degree-completion rates, as well as higher employment rates and salaries after graduation are associated with participation in study-abroad programs, international research visits and field studies, and co-op and clinical placements.

Albertans who participate in international learning opportunities develop important skills and competencies, such as leadership, problem solving, intercultural communication, and openness to new ideas.<sup>v</sup> As a result of these opportunities, participants often engage in global issues, start new businesses, take on leadership roles, and contribute to vibrant and tolerant communities.

Similarly, global diplomatic and economic ties become stronger between countries whose students are involved in international exchanges. For example, Albertans who study abroad are likely to develop relationships with people in other countries, and they often maintain these relationships throughout their professional careers. This networking expands Alberta's academic, trade, diplomatic, and economic connections.

### **Culturally vibrant campuses and additional services:**

Post-secondary institutions create international learning environments by welcoming students and scholars from around the world and by tackling global problems through learning and research. Diverse campus communities enrich teaching and learning experiences with a wider variety of perspectives, create more international learning opportunities for students, and encourage learners to become global citizens.

Revenue from international education can improve the sustainability of Alberta's post-secondary system. Additional revenue could enable post-secondary institutions to create more seats for Alberta learners, offer more support services for students, and deliver more programming in more locations around the province.

Every year, post-secondary institutions from around the world are ranked for quality and reputation. Institutions performing well in these global rankings have a high proportion of international students and faculty, collaborate with a global network of researchers, and have strong reputations to match.

*"This opportunity is literally life changing and so hard to put into words. Academically it was very beneficial to be immersed in other cultures. I believe having international experience as a business student really sets you apart. I knew I was going to enjoy exchange and experience self-growth but not to the extreme that I did."*

*— Source: Jordan McFarlane, Bachelor of Business Administration -- General Management, Mount Royal University, 2019*

In recent years, NorQuest College has welcomed international students to its rural campus in Drayton Valley, with over 20 international students studying alongside Alberta students. This cohort, coupled with the tuition they pay, makes the program viable in a location that was not possible based on local demand only. Supported by the Town of Drayton Valley, local businesses, and community partners, international students contribute positively to the community's vibrancy and local economy.

*— Source: Norquest College*

# The Alberta Advantage

Alberta's quality post-secondary education system is known for exceptional universities, colleges, technical institutions, and research facilities.

All learning institutions that admit international students meet strong oversight and quality programming requirements.

Alberta has the advantage of meeting learners' needs through a diverse collection of learning institutions:

- Publicly funded universities, colleges, and polytechnics;
- Private career colleges and professional schools;
- Faith-based colleges and seminaries;
- Flight schools; and
- Language schools.

International students who choose to come to Alberta to study are choosing a world-class education destination that is:

- safe and welcoming;
- focused on quality assurance and student success;
- engaged in leading edge research and innovation;
- a leader in skills development and job training;
- connected to industry and the global marketplace; and
- supported by top quality instruction from world-renowned faculty.

For these reasons and more, Alberta hosted over 25,200 international students at publicly funded, post-secondary institutions in 2018-2019.<sup>vi</sup> Over the last five years, international student enrolment at Alberta post-secondary institutions has increased by 36%.

**25,200**  
International post-secondary  
students in 2018-2019



## Edmonton's Welcome Booth

Six Edmonton post-secondary institutions (Concordia University of Edmonton, MacEwan University, NAIT, NorQuest College, The King's University, and the University of Alberta) have come together officially to welcome international students when they first arrive at the Edmonton International Airport. The Edmonton Post-Secondary Airport Welcome Booth provides information on everything an international student needs to know on their first day/night in Edmonton. The airport campus greeters help them find food, a place to stay for the night, and a ride into the city – part of the Alberta Advantage.

- *International Students Guide*

# Opportunities and Challenges

While Alberta has made progress in advancing its international education sector, there is still more to do. Alberta must navigate the ever-evolving opportunities and challenges in international education to ensure the sector contributes to economic growth, to developing a skilled and diverse workforce, to encouraging innovation, and to building inclusive and global places of learning. Alberta will focus on key priority areas, including talent attraction, sector sustainability, and international skills for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

## Key Priority Area 1: Global Talent Attraction

Alberta's competitive international talent attraction strategy can be broken down into three main considerations:

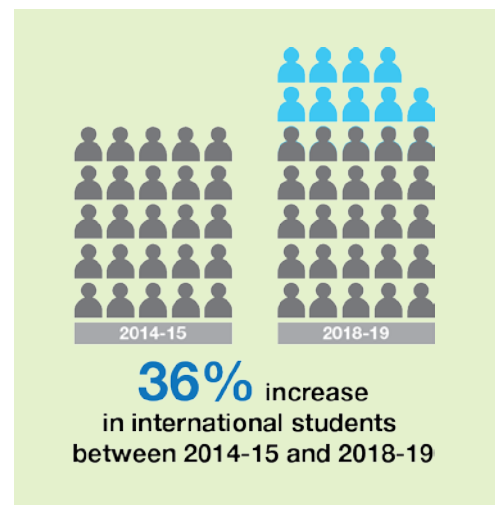
- international promotion and brand recognition;
- the need for a strategic and diversified approach; and
- labour market integration.

### 1.1. International promotion and brand recognition

Alberta is in a global race for talent. International students have an increasing number of attractive options to choose from when selecting a study destination. To raise their international profile in a hyper-competitive environment, many jurisdictions have launched coordinated, national or regional attraction strategies and programs to draw international talent to their institutions. These programs raise awareness and recognition of a region as a preferred destination for international students through targeted marketing and promotional activities. As a result, potential students and their families come to recognize the post-secondary institutions associated with these promotional efforts as world-class providers of high-quality education.

While an important player, Alberta is relatively new in the competitive international education sector. One of Alberta's largest challenges is a lack of brand recognition internationally, due largely to limited marketing and exposure abroad. Individual institutions wishing to demonstrate their value to potential international students may struggle to stand out among the big players who are benefitting from coordinated marketing campaigns and well-known jurisdictions.

***Goal 1.1 – Enhance exposure of Alberta's post-secondary education system in international markets to put the province on the map for international learners.***



## 1.2. Strategic and diversified approach to talent attraction

Although Alberta's international education sector is strong, social and political instability occurring elsewhere around the world can impact the flow of international students to the province.

At present, the majority of international students who choose to study in Alberta come from only a handful of countries. This lack of student diversity puts Alberta at risk in an age of geo-political disruption. By relying too heavily on any one source country for recruiting international students, the province is less resilient to shifts in student mobility and educational preferences, thereby negatively impacting enrolment projections. A further lack of diversification is seen in international student enrolment patterns across the province. A large majority of international students choose to study at a select number of institutions located in Alberta's large urban centers. However, this trend excludes many smaller and rural institutions and communities from receiving the many benefits of hosting international students. These institutions often cite a lack of resources and expertise as barriers preventing them from growing their international student populations. As a result, many quality post-secondary institutions operating outside of Alberta's large urban centers are less well-known to prospective international students, when compared to their urban peers.

The Government of Alberta is committed to diversifying trade and expanding market access abroad. Alberta needs to apply this same commitment to diversification and expansion to its international education sector.

***Goal 1.2 - Diversify attraction efforts to new target markets and develop learning institutions' expertise to broaden international engagement across the system.***

## 1.3. Labour market integration

As the use of artificial intelligence and automation continues to rise in the next decade, half of Canadian jobs are expected to require new skills.<sup>vii</sup> This shift, along with an aging workforce, will require Alberta to be ready to fill shortages of talented labour. International students represent a potential source of much needed talent. Many students, faculty, and researchers who come to the province want to stay and make significant contributions to the Alberta and Canadian economy. However, the majority of international students who come to Alberta to study eventually leave after graduation or after a few years of unrelated work. According to Statistics Canada, between 20% and 27% of international students became permanent residents in the 10 years following the receipt of their first study permit.<sup>viii</sup>

Students who graduate from post-secondary programs that match Alberta's labour market needs are more likely to be successful in securing relevant employment after graduation. When pathways for permanent residency focus on the skills, education, and entrepreneurial gaps needed for regional growth, international students are further encouraged and empowered to stay in Alberta and contribute to the economy. This focus on meeting economic needs will be a key component of the new Alberta Advantage Immigration Strategy.

***Goal 1.3 – Promote academic programs tied to research, innovation, and labour market needs in order to retain more international talent in the province.***

## Key Priority Area 2: Smart and Sustainable Growth

Alberta's comprehensive international education strategy will account for three foundational features for smart and sustainable growth:

- institutional capacity for growth;
- an enabling policy environment; and
- commitment to quality assurance and resilience.

### 2.1. Institutional capacity for growth

Attracting international students and researchers to Alberta contributes to the province's academic, cultural, and economic prosperity. In 2018-2019, of the 25,200 international post-secondary students studying in Alberta, 66% were enrolled at a publicly funded university, and 34% were enrolled at a publicly-funded college or polytechnic. Currently, most international students coming to Alberta are choosing to study at a large university or college located in a large urban centre.

As a whole, Alberta is in a favorable position to continue to attract international students, recognizing that capacity to accommodate more students differs by learning institution and by program. International students come with a range of different learning styles and require different teaching instruction, student services, and multicultural understanding. Inevitably, there comes a point where increasing international student enrolments outpace an institution's ability to provide quality programs and to provide support services for all learners, both domestic and international.

To host international students, institutions must have sufficient capacity to meet the unique needs of international students both applying to and enrolled at their institution. Research shows many institutions are not ready to manage surging international student enrolment, especially those institutions that do not have significant experience in international talent attraction.<sup>ix</sup>

Furthermore, institutions must balance the work of attracting international talent with considerations for Alberta learners. Institutions need to find ways of ensuring Alberta learners have access to popular programs while remaining welcoming to international students and managing international student ratios for optimal learning experiences.

**Goal 2.1 – Set appropriate targets for growth based on institutional capacity to ensure a quality education for all students.**

At Lethbridge College, employees have always played an essential role in intercultural education and the cultural integration of international students. Building on their experiences working with international students, the college partnered with NorQuest College to offer a workshop series to help faculty and staff meet the increasingly diverse needs of a wide range of learners. As a result of those workshops, an online toolbox of tips and strategies was created to increase awareness in intercultural communication.

– Source: Lethbridge College

## 2.2. Enabling policy environment

Publicly funded universities, colleges, and polytechnics and private colleges share a common desire to cultivate talent and to enable learners to reach their fullest potential. Learning paths do not always mean pursuing traditional degree, diploma and certificate programs often associated with higher learning. Increasingly, post-secondary institutions are investing in innovative learning and training programs that suit the unique needs and conditions of a wide variety of learners, such as through continuing education, distance learning, and corporate training. International education policy has struggled to remain contemporary in a landscape of multi-modal learning. In other words, international students are missing out on opportunities to pursue programs of choice, due to excessive red tape concerning which programs and institutions can enroll international students.

Alberta has an opportunity to grow its exports of educational products, services, and expertise. Already, some Alberta learning institutions are selling curriculum or customizing training to corporate and international clients. Others are delivering joint credentials and programs with global partners. With support from government, post-secondary institutions are also contributing their expertise to international research and development projects and are growing their reputations and networks. More can be done to grow the participation of Alberta institutions in this area and to capitalize on Alberta's wealth of talent and expertise. By developing these revenue streams, Alberta learning institutions can diversify their revenue mix, improve their financial sustainability, and become less reliant on government funding.

To remain competitive in the international education sector, government and post-secondary institutions must remove barriers to innovation and to talent attraction. Updated policies will allow designated institutions to enroll more international students into a broader range of post-secondary programs, to export more education products and services, and to raise Alberta's competitive advantage.

***Goal 2.2 – Support institutions in growing their academic programs and educational exports to an expanding network of international clients to diversify revenue sources.***

## 2.3. Commitment to quality assurance and resilience

The Government of Alberta and post-secondary institutions remain committed to enacting future-focused policy that ensures Alberta has the necessary skills to successfully compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Global Academic Leadership Development (GALD) Program, offered at the University of Alberta, shares Alberta expertise and experiences in postsecondary governance and management with overseas university administrators. Through a partnership with the China Scholarship Council, the program has contributed immensely to the visibility and reputation of Alberta postsecondary education and to the capacity building of world-class universities in China. Since 2012, over 750 Chinese administrators from 200 institutions have participated in this three-month program.

– Source: University of Alberta

Increasingly, post-secondary institutions are engaging in for-profit international activities to generate additional revenue. While government is committed to removing barriers to innovation and talent attraction, this work must still be balanced with appropriate risk-mitigation. For-profit ventures, such as educational exports, overseas campuses, and partnerships between Alberta institutions and international partners present additional financial, reputational, legal and operational risks to post-secondary institutions. Potential risks to Alberta's international education sector include political and diplomatic instabilities, maturing education systems in primary source markets, and growing global competition for international students. Likewise, how, when, and why students access education is evolving quickly, as technology is transforming what skills are needed to succeed in the world of work and to thrive in a rapidly globalizing economy. As learning models evolve to accommodate increasingly digital models that can be accessed from anywhere, understanding and mitigating the impacts of these global trends will be increasingly vital.

In the critical business of understanding and managing risk in the international education sector, jurisdictions that do well demonstrate a high-degree of coordination between learning providers and government. Also, these jurisdictions demonstrate robust processes for identifying opportunities and risks in their ever-changing global context. They remain resilient by developing robust risk mitigation strategies and committing to program quality.

***Goal 2.3 – Support strategic foresight and better risk-management to strengthen quality assurance and resiliency across the system.***



## Key Priority Area 3: International Skills Needed to Succeed

Alberta will focus on three foundational features to ensure Alberta's graduates have the global competencies, experience and networks to succeed in a globalized world:

- awareness of and access to education abroad opportunities;
- system-wide collaboration for greater impact; and
- alignment with long-term economic and diplomatic priorities.

### 3.1. Awareness of and access to education abroad opportunities

Alberta's graduating students must be prepared to communicate, to collaborate, and to compete in a diverse and global labour market. Students gain the international competencies and skills needed to be successful in the global economy through international learning opportunities, such as studying or working abroad, and through the internationalization of institutions, classrooms, and curriculum. Study-abroad opportunities also prepare Alberta students to participate in a modern, diverse workforce and society.

Access to study-abroad opportunities varies across institutions and regions of the province. Only 6% of Alberta's post-secondary students study abroad as part of their academic program.<sup>x</sup> Students in jurisdictions like the United States, Australia, and the European Union benefit from ambitious student mobility strategies that are not yet present in Alberta and Canada. In addition, Alberta learners who are already interested in studying abroad experience barriers such as travel costs and uncertainty about the transferability of credits earned abroad.

**Goal 3.1 – Increase public messages about the value, importance, and availability of international learning opportunities, to improve access at home and abroad.**

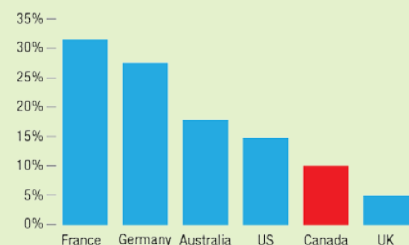
### 3.2. System-wide collaboration for greater impact

Many of Alberta's universities, colleges and polytechnic institutions have their own study and work abroad programs to support student participation in international learning. While individual programs have been



6% of Alberta's post-secondary students studied abroad as part of their academic program.

– Source: Graduate Outcomes Survey: Class of 2013-14.



Comparison of several countries and their percentages of undergrads who study abroad during the course of their degree (2013-16).

–Global Education for Canadians: Equipping Young Canadians to Succeed at Home & Abroad." Centre for International Policy Studies, 2017.

successful in providing students with valuable international experiences, these uncoordinated efforts have not significantly increased the number of Alberta learners gaining international skills and competencies.

In its report, “Global Education for Canadians: Equipping Young Canadians to Succeed at Home and Abroad,” the Centre for International Policy Studies suggests a strategy for global learning “must marry the rich diversity of study-abroad opportunities across campuses with a more unified approach to norms, credentials and data collection.”<sup>xi</sup> Furthermore, an effective international education strategy is based on a partnership between government, educational institutions, and the private sector.

More collaboration between government, learning institutions, and industry partners would likely increase the number of Alberta learners participating in international learning opportunities, decrease the cost of developing and administering programs for all involved, and increase the positive impact initiatives have on learners, institutions, companies and communities.

***Goal 3.2 – Support collaboration among institutions on education abroad to expand participation and to increase the impact of new and existing programs.***

### **3.3. Alignment with long-term economic and diplomatic priorities**

International education is a way to secure strategic alliances through global collaboration. When students study abroad, they gain intercultural experience and work-ready skills while also establishing networks and building new relationships. These positive connections for students translate into positive connections for the province and go a long way in encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, boosting tourism, and fostering new trade and diplomatic ties.

The connections made by students through study abroad factor into the international education strategies of many countries, who have come to realize that study abroad programs help to expand their diplomatic reach in new markets. For example, in 2014, the Australian government launched the New Colombo Plan, an initiative designed to enable 10,000 Australian students each year to study and to participate in internships across Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. By 2020, alumni of this program will number around 40,000 young Australians. “Over time, the growing cohort of alumni will play an increasingly important role in Australia’s relationships with its neighbours to become an influential and diverse network of Australians with direct experience in the Indo-Pacific, strong professional and personal networks across [the] region, and a driving force in Australia’s future prosperity.”<sup>xii</sup> Study abroad opportunities, similar to this Australian program, can help Alberta achieve provincial priorities for diplomacy, economic growth, tourism and trade.

For Alberta to prosper and to maintain international influence, it must build and strengthen relationships with countries emerging as economic leaders on the world stage. Academic mobility between countries will empower Albertans to respond to the opportunities and challenges of changing international landscapes.




***Goal 3.3 – Align study-abroad programs with target markets around the world to advance provincial priorities for research, economic growth, and diplomatic partnerships.***

# Goals and Key Actions

## PRIORITY 1: Global Talent Attraction

Alberta will attract talented international students to Alberta post-secondary institutions and communities.

KEY					
	TALENT ATTRACTION & GLOBAL MARKETING	POLICY DIRECTION & QUALITY ASSURANCE	CAPACITY BUILDING & SYSTEM COORDINATION	DIPLOMACY & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	RESEARCH, DATA & COMMUNICATIONS

Goals	Key Actions	Core Service Functions
<p><b>1.1 International promotion and brand recognition</b></p> <p>To put the province on the map for international learners, Alberta will enhance exposure of the province’s post-secondary education system in international markets by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Promoting Alberta’s education system internationally through a variety of innovative in-person and virtual communication methods.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Developing new partnerships with governments and organizations in target markets to support international education opportunities.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Liaising with key partners, including Global Affairs Canada, Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), and Alberta alumni around the world to leverage established recruitment efforts and connections with overseas networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an Education in Alberta brand and promotional materials to demonstrate the top reasons to study in Alberta and to increase international visibility of Alberta’s international education offerings for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ trade offices and oversea missions</li> <li>○ visiting foreign delegations</li> <li>○ education events</li> <li>○ social media campaigns</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Participate in new signature international education events [e.g. Asia-Pacific Association for International Education Conference (APAIE)] to promote Alberta as a preferred learning destination to educational partners around the world.</li> <li>• Leverage Trade Commissioners and Canadian offices abroad to promote an Education in Alberta brand.</li> <li>• Establish Memoranda of Understanding and partnerships with jurisdictions of strategic importance to Alberta to foster collaboration on post-secondary education opportunities.</li> <li>• Engage visiting foreign delegations and organize local familiarization tours.</li> <li>• Strengthen communication with Alberta’s K-12 international accredited schools and engage Alberta’s international alumni networks to promote actively Alberta’s post-secondary offerings and to improve the success of educational events.</li> </ul>	  





<p><b>1.2 Strategic and diversified approach to talent attraction</b></p> <p>To broaden international engagement across the system, Alberta will diversify attraction efforts to new target markets and develop learning institutions' expertise by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Developing and implementing a market diversification plan using robust research and market intelligence to identify new source markets that have growth potential.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Providing and building capacity and expertise among smaller and rural institutions to participate in the international student program.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Unifying Government of Alberta ministries around the goals and actions for international education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan three team Alberta missions to travel to priority markets that have growth potential for international student mobility and align with Alberta's economic priorities.</li> <li>• Work with employers, institutions, and municipal governments to promote and utilize new immigration streams under the Alberta Advantage Immigration Strategy, to help talented international students wishing to study and stay in smaller and rural communities.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of collaborating with Global Affairs Canada on a digital marketing campaign to highlight post-secondary education in Alberta, including opportunities at smaller and rural institutions.</li> <li>• Help smaller and rural institutions further their own talent attraction efforts by organizing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ annual events for education professionals to build expertise, to review best practices in international talent attraction, and to promote collaboration and mentorship across the system.</li> <li>○ roundtable discussion events with leading experts and briefings on target markets.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop best practices for working with reputable third party recruiters responsibly.</li> </ul>	   
<p><b>1.3 Labour market integration</b></p> <p>To retain international talent in the province, Alberta will promote academic programs of study that are tied to research, innovation, and labour market needs by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Working with post-secondary education providers to align their international student recruitment more closely with regional skill and innovation needs.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Reducing barriers to international student participation in the Alberta labour market.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Promoting Alberta's research and innovation system internationally to generate interest and to attract top talent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities for international students to network and intern with Alberta's business community.</li> <li>• Continue to partner with MITACS to showcase Alberta universities and leading-edge research to top international students and researchers.</li> <li>• Share market intelligence with learning institutions to align recruitment efforts with Alberta labour market needs.</li> <li>• Work with the federal government to ensure visa conditions enable international students to participate in work integrated learning opportunities.</li> <li>• Encourage post-secondary institutions to promote Alberta's new entrepreneurial immigration streams [e.g. Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP)].</li> </ul>	  



# Goals and Key Actions



## PRIORITY 2: Smart and Sustainable Growth

Alberta's post-secondary system will remain strong and innovative through an informed and balanced approach to international growth.

KEY					
	TALENT ATTRACTION & GLOBAL MARKETING	POLICY DIRECTION & QUALITY ASSURANCE	CAPACITY BUILDING & SYSTEM COORDINATION	DIPLOMACY & INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	RESEARCH, DATA & COMMUNICATIONS

Goals	Key Actions	Core Service Functions
<p><b>2.1 Institutional capacity for growth</b></p> <p>To ensure quality education for all students, Alberta will set appropriate targets for growth based on institutional capacity by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Working with learning institutions to establish and monitor growth targets for international student attraction that reflect institution capacity.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Implementing enrolment best practices, as well as outcomes and indicators designed to realize the benefits of international student growth, without displacing Alberta students.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Supporting the best possible student experience by promoting a culture of service excellence, professionalism, and integrity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with learning institutions to establish annual targets for growth in international student enrolment that align with current and future capacity and experience in supporting international students.</li> <li>• Profile and communicate best practices in international student enrolment to ensure access is maintained for Albertans. Examples could include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ using revenue from international education to expand high-demand programs or to deliver programs in more locations.</li> <li>○ developing institutional policies to prevent displacement of Alberta learners by international students.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Define and monitor outcomes and key performance indicators for international education in Alberta by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ setting enrolment targets for domestic learners;</li> <li>○ gathering data measuring international students' experiences;</li> <li>○ monitoring a healthy ratio of international to Alberta students;</li> <li>○ assessing the impact of international education on local labour market and communities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Implement an international education dashboard to share timely data for public transparency.</li> <li>• Maintain leading standards in international student protection, such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ providing accurate information to international students on visa conditions and work opportunities.</li> <li>○ offering tuition guarantees for international students guaranteeing the total cost of a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	   






	<p>program, if completed during the standard duration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ encouraging strong international student voices, through participation on student advocacy groups.</li> <li>• Continue to require institutions to offer appropriate support services for international students (e.g. orientation, academic advising, mental health).</li> <li>• Connect post-secondary and K-12 learning institutions to share knowledge and leverage expertise.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.2 Enabling policy environment</b></p> <p>To diversify institutions' revenue mix, Alberta will help institutions expand their academic programs and educational exports by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Reducing red tape to provide more program options to prospective international students.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Supporting post-secondary institutions in leveraging commercial opportunities around the world.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Strengthening coordination between government and institutions to realize market opportunities for exporting educational services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize the Alberta Designation Requirements to enable publicly funded institutions to offer new programs, and to allow new institutions to apply for designation.</li> <li>• Organize specific capacity building initiatives to grow institutional expertise in working in target markets including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ roundtable event(s) to discuss opportunities to provide education or training abroad.</li> <li>○ Information sessions for post-secondary staff on safe and secure opportunities to work with international funding institutions to provide education and training in developing countries.</li> <li>○ Introductions for post-secondary executives to foreign government stakeholders, such as ambassadors and ministers, who are seeking to improve their countries' advanced education systems.</li> <li>○ Introductions for post-secondary executives and staff to industry leaders and global clients who want to deliver customized or industry specific training in another country.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strengthen communication and outreach with learning institutions to understand their needs and goals.</li> <li>• Build and strengthen relationships with staff responsible for international education at learning institutions to enable Alberta to react quickly when external opportunities arise.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.3 Commitment to quality assurance and resilience</b></p> <p>To strengthen system-wide quality assurance and resiliency, Alberta will improve strategic foresight and risk-management by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a strategic foresight analysis of the international education sector to consider possible future trends and identify potential disruptions.</li> <li>• Share risk management best practices with institutions to enhance the ability of Alberta's adult learning system to mitigate potential risks and adapt to future trends, and to drive innovation in the evolving international education sector.</li> </ul>	




<p><b>A.</b> Working with post-secondary institutions to increase their aptitude for effective risk management.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Considering future trends and proactively preparing institutions to capitalize on new and emerging opportunities.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Support Alberta's post-secondary institutions in their efforts to provide quality learning and innovative programs that meet or exceed international credential recognition standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with foreign governments to ensure Alberta's credentials are recognized the world over.</li> </ul>	 
--	--	--

## Goals and Key Actions

### PRIORITY 3: International Skills Needed to Succeed

Alberta will equip learners with the international skills and competencies they need to participate effectively in the global economy.

<b>KEY</b>	 <small>TALENT ATTRACTION &amp; GLOBAL MARKETING</small>	 <small>POLICY DIRECTION &amp; QUALITY ASSURANCE</small>	 <small>CAPACITY BUILDING &amp; SYSTEM COORDINATION</small>	 <small>DIPLOMACY &amp; INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS</small>	 <small>RESEARCH, DATA &amp; COMMUNICATIONS</small>
------------	--	--	---	--	---

Goals	Key Actions	Government Function
<p><b>3.1 Awareness of and access to education abroad opportunities</b></p> <p>To improve access at home and abroad, Alberta will increase public messages about the value, importance, and availability of international learning opportunities, through the following measures:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Promote the benefits of studying and working abroad.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Make searching for international learning opportunities easier for students across the province.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the value of international learning to stakeholders including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students and parents: to understand the benefits of studying abroad, including improving job readiness.</li> <li>○ Industry: to understand the value of hiring graduates with international experience.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Form K-12 Student Exchange Program Alumni Group to act as ambassadors for international learning.</li> <li>• Develop a mechanism for learning institutions to promote available study abroad programs to learners across the province.</li> <li>• Continue to offer Student Aid funding for Alberta learners pursuing post-secondary studies abroad.</li> </ul>	  

<p><b>C.</b> Reduce barriers to student participation to improve access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster development of an alumni network of Albertans who have studied internationally to serve as promoters of global learning.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to provide dual credit for students participating in international learning programs and exchanges in secondary schools.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.2 System-wide collaboration for greater impact</b></p> <p>To increase impact of new and existing study abroad programs, Alberta will facilitate collaboration between institutions by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Reducing barriers to institutional participation.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Helping post-secondary staff get the skills and knowledge they need to develop and administer their own study abroad programs.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Encouraging standard, system-wide approaches to quality assurance, data collection, and transferability of academic credit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize workshops to share best practices on encouraging international learning and building affordable and accessible programs that support curricular needs.</li> <li>• Develop online toolkit of resources to support learning institutions in developing and administering their own study abroad programs.</li> <li>• Leverage expertise of institutions with significant experience in education abroad to support institutions with less experience.</li> <li>• Improve recognition and standardization of academic credit earned through international learning by encouraging institutions and organizations to share credential assessment results.</li> <li>• Monitor trends in outbound student mobility.</li> <li>• Develop and share best practices on quality assurance and risk management to ensure students receive safe and high-quality global learning experiences.</li> <li>• Encourage institutions to include global learning outcomes in their academic plans.</li> </ul>	  
<p><b>3.3 Alignment with long-term economic and diplomatic priorities</b></p> <p>To advance provincial priorities for research, economic growth, and diplomatic partnerships, Alberta will align study-abroad programs with priority markets around the world by:</p> <p><b>A.</b> Pursuing student mobility partnerships with emerging countries.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Mobilizing partners in government and industry to expand international learning opportunities for Albertans.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Investing in international education programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Alberta’s international education grant programs to ensure study abroad opportunities better align with target markets and objectives for economic growth.</li> <li>• Incorporate global education goals into Alberta trade missions and the work of Alberta’s international offices where possible.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities with Albertan and Canadian companies doing business abroad to identify international co-op and internship opportunities for Alberta learners.</li> </ul>	  



# Measuring Success

This strategy for international education affirms a commitment to prepare students, and the province more broadly, to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and an increasingly globalized world.

The Government of Alberta will work with students, learning institutions, and industry to implement a new vision for international education across Alberta's adult learning system. This strategy includes both new actions and ongoing initiatives to provide a comprehensive guide to future activities related to international education.

Progress and achievement of outcomes will be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Measuring success must go beyond project management and task completion to evaluate program effectiveness and overall impact.

Success will mean:

- Alberta's institutions are attracting more qualified international students and academics from around the world;
- Growth in the system is smart and sustainable and benefits Albertans; and
- Alberta students are equipped with international competencies and skills to participate in a modern, diverse and global workforce and society.

Specifically, Alberta will develop performance measures related to international education. Measures may include :

- international student enrolment targets and completion and satisfaction rates;
- Alberta students' participation in international learning and development of global skills and competencies;
- contributions of international students and researchers to research and innovation; and
- new intergovernmental agreements that support international education.

Cumulatively, Alberta will have developed, attracted, and retained the global talent necessary for the province's workforce for the future.

---

<sup>i</sup> World Economic Forum. "The Human Capital Report: Employment, Skills and Human Capital Global Challenge Insight Report," 2015. Accessed December 3, 2019. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Human\\_Capital\\_Report\\_2015.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Human_Capital_Report_2015.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc. "Economic Impact of International Education in Canada – 2017 Update" 2017. Global Affairs Canada, Accessed August 21, 2019. <https://www.international.gc.ca/education>.

- 
- iii National Institute of Aging, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S. Department of State. "Why Population Aging Matters: a Global Perspective," 2007. The United State Government. Accessed August 21, 2019. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2017-06/WPAM.pdf>
- iv Government of Alberta. "Alberta Research and Innovation Framework," 2017. Government of Alberta. Accessed August 21, 2019. <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/arif-report.pdf>
- v Canadian Bureau for International Education. "World of Learning– Special Feature: Education Abroad" 2016. CBIE. Accessed August 21, 2019. [https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SpecialFeature\\_EducationAbroad-EN.pdf](https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SpecialFeature_EducationAbroad-EN.pdf)
- vi Alberta Advanced Education. Learner and Enrolment Reporting System. 2019.
- vii Royal Bank of Canada. "Humans Wanted: How Canadian Youth Can Thrive in the Age of Disruption," 2018. Royal Bank of Canada. Accessed October 3, 2019. <https://www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/assets-custom/pdf/RBC-Future-Skills-Report-FINAL-Singles.pdf>.
- viii Feng Hou and Yugian Lu. "International students who become permanent residents in Canada. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 12-591-X," 2015. Statistics Canada. Accessed August 21, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14299-eng.htm>
- ix Choudaha, Rahul. "Campus Readiness for Supporting International Student Success." *Journal of International Students* (2016), 6. I-V.
- x Alberta Advanced Education, *Alberta Graduate Outcomes Survey: Class of 2013/2014*, 2017. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-graduate-outcomes-survey-class-of-quantitative-fieldwork-and-analysis-graduate-outcomes>
- xi Margaret Biggs and Roland Paris. "Global Education for Canadians: Equipping Young Canadians to Succeed at Home & Abroad." *Centre for International Policy Studies*, November 2017. Accessed August 21, 2019. <http://goglobalcanada.ca/>.
- xii Australian Government - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *New Colombo Plan: Connect to Australia's Future - Study in the Region*. Australian Government. Accessed October 30, 2019. <https://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/about/Pages/about.aspx>.