

NORTHERN LIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES OF CANADIAN INSTITUTIONS AND THE NATIONAL WORKFORCE

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Canadian Bureau for International Education Bureau canadien de l'éducation internationale

NORTHERN LIGHTS: INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES OF CANADIAN INSTITUTIONS AND THE NATIONAL WORKFORCE

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THE CANADIAN BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
Acknowledgments	3
Highlights of the Findings	4
Section One: Introduction	5
Section Two: The Purposes of the Study	8
Section Three: Policy Snapshots	10
• Canada.....	10
• Other Countries.....	12
Section Four: Students' Voices: Survey and Focus Group Findings	16
• Student Profile.....	16
• Theme One: Many International Graduates Will Not Stay In Canada.....	18
• Theme Two: Here Is What Needs To Be Done, Mr. Prime Minister	19
• Theme Three: It Takes More Than A Degree to Get A Job — The Value of Networking and An Early Start.....	21
• Theme Four: International Graduate Experience with the Canadian Labour Market: Lessons Learned	22
Section Five: The Role of International Student Offices	25
Section Six: Concluding Remarks	26
Section Seven: Recommendations	27
References	29
Appendices	33
Appendix One: Web-Based Survey	33
Appendix Two: Focus Group Protocol	44
Appendix Three: Employer Survey.....	46
Appendix Four: Good Practices: Sample of Letter for Employer to Use When Making an International Graduate a Job Offer	47
Appendix Five: Good Practices: Sample Letter from Institution for Student Applying for Employment (Sensitization of Employer)	48
About the Authors	49

PREFACE

As President of CBIE, a national organization that engages in policy development, research, advocacy and public information, I am pleased to announce the findings of the first large-scale, national study focused on the experience of international students in entering the Canadian labour market.

This study, facilitated by university and college student service professionals, provides the direct views and lived reality of international graduates of our education system. CBIE advocates for improvements in policies and practices vis-à-vis international students and over the years has been successful in working with federal government departments, especially Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), to achieve changes that both make this country a more attractive venue for students from abroad as well as enable our society to fully benefit from their skills. Since 2000 a key focus for CBIE has been opening up off-campus work to international students – previously denied to all but co-op students and those in a few other categories. We were gratified initially by a series of pilot projects, followed by a national program commencing in 2006. We have also been concerned about the challenges faced by international graduates wishing to obtain work experience in Canada and lobbied for longer permits as well as a less stringent timeframe for job search post-graduation. In 2005 CIC responded to our concerns by increasing the work eligibility to two years in most communities – unfortunately excluding three major cities. We continue to press for an across-the-board approach.

This study arises from our interest in understanding the impact of the 2005 change in post-graduation policy. Knowing that 30,000 foreign students graduate from our post-secondary institutions annually, we were struck by data showing that from May 2005 to January 2007 – a 20-month period – fewer than 14,000 eligible foreign graduates were issued a work permit under the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program. We wanted to learn why working in Canada did not appeal to more new graduates – were there impediments we hadn't foreseen? Were there other factors that drew them away? Were there measures that we could suggest to make them more likely to stay? The bottom line was our sense that, despite the improved environment, somehow we were not capitalizing on the immense talent represented by the international cohort.

This study offers some startling revelations.

- Only a third of international students graduating from Canadian post-secondary institutions plan to stay in Canada to live and work.
- Despite improvements, students find policies and practices — not to mention application forms — inconsistent and confusing.
- Employers are often unaware that they can hire international students and graduates. Those who are aware tend to be reluctant to do so. Employers with U.S. interests tell us that hiring international graduates is not an option since these individuals cannot cross the border freely.
- Students believe that the Canadian government needs to be clearer about its intentions and make sure that their educational institutions and potential employers are better informed.
- If Canada wishes to attract and retain more international students, we must invest in the dissemination of knowledge to stakeholders, including employers, officials, institutions and students themselves. We must also articulate more clearly for ourselves the importance of helping international graduates access our workforce.

We encourage you to use this report to advocate for improvements. We have come some distance over the past few years but, to succeed in a very competitive environment for talented people, we must do more to entice international graduates to stay on. As is noted in several places in the report, more research too is required to understand the push and pull factors in an international graduate's initial career decisions.

Thanks to the many international students whose responses wove the fabric of this report, to the student service professionals, especially international student advisers and career counselors who supported our research with coordination, promotion and advice, to the employers who offered their views and to the hardworking research advisory team that reviewed many drafts and recommended valuable resources.

Thanks to the team at Queen's University that conducted the study with verve and intelligence.

We also wish to thank the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) whose funding made this research project possible.

CCL plays an important role in stimulating thinking and new approaches for educators, policymakers and Canadian society in general by taking the dialogue on education, through insightful reports, to the Canadian people.

— Jim Fox
President, Canadian Bureau for International Education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with any study of this complexity and scope, the contributions of many people are required. We want to begin by thanking the 1,000 international students and graduates who shared their hopes, dreams and lived experiences with us. We recognize that for some students, sharing what was essentially a personal story took courage. Thank you for trusting us. The students are the heart of the study and it is our hope that we have honoured their contributions.

Next, we want to recognize the International Student Advisers at Canadian colleges and universities. To these professionals whose efforts are heavily invested in the educational growth and future of international graduates, thank you.

Six people served on the Research Advisory Group. Thanks to Bea Clark, Niagara College; Sonal Pathak, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC); Anoop Shankar, TELUS Canada; Vianne Timmons, University of Prince Edward Island; Deborah Turnbull, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, and Maia Welbourne, CIC. Each of you in your own way enabled us to access the documents and the people we needed to keep us up-to-date with the quickly changing conditions within the country and abroad. You were all generous in your critique of our work.

Then there are people whose efforts become invisible but without whom we would not have been able to open up participation to students all across Canada. To the E-Learning staff at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University, thank you.

A special thank you goes to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) and Jennifer Humphries, in particular, whose idea it was to do this study and who generated the proposal that went forward for review and vetting. Thank you as well to Natalia Amiel of CBIE who worked with us daily to manage the research project.

Finally, we want to thank the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) that awarded the funding to carry out this study.

While we had tremendous support from many people, the content of the study is our responsibility alone.

— Members of the Research Team

A note on the title: Northern Lights

Among the thousands of international students who graduate each year from our universities and colleges are brilliant young professionals who are keen to gain work experience in our northern country — they represent a constellation of “bright lights” or “rising stars”, who can boost our national talent pool, and are a particular advantage to Canada in a time of demographic change and skills deficits.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS

- A thousand international students from seven provinces and 20 colleges and universities participated in the study, the first large-scale national study focused on the experience of international students in entering the Canadian labour market.
- Only a third of international students graduating from Canadian post-secondary institutions will attempt to stay in Canada to live and work.
- When it comes to choosing where to live and work, international students prefer to live in Canada but work in the United States.
- Students from hot economies are keen to return home, knowing that their Canadian degree or diploma enhances their career prospects.
- Students are deterred from working in Canada by inconsistent and confusing policies and practices.
- International students who have been successful in getting work either during their studies or upon graduation report that their efforts to network played a significant role in their success.
- Many employers do not know that they are now allowed to hire international students and graduates. Even when they are informed, they are reluctant to do so until the government of Canada provides better guidance on the regulations.
- Employers who have hired international graduates report that current U.S. border policies block these employees from carrying out company business in the U.S.
- The lack of a strategic, fully articulated policy on international students is damaging Canada's efforts to be competitive with its trading partners for the pool of highly skilled graduates.

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

Foreign students represent a group that has undeniable advantages over other immigrant groups. Foreign students at Canadian universities and colleges have generally high proficiency in English and as a result are in more of a competitive position in finding employment in Canada. Furthermore... they are immersed in Canadian history, culture and values which prepares them for the social and cultural challenges that may arise in the workforce or in the community (Peykov, 2004, p.4).

An important feature of globalization is the rapidly increasing mobility of highly educated people (see OECD, 2002; Bond, 2004). Growing both in number and diversity, this global movement of labour is occurring at a time when many Western countries are experiencing increasing labour market shortages – shortages that most economic analysts agree cannot be ameliorated by domestic-born labour (Chiswick et al, 2002; Conference Board of Canada, 2007; Grayson, 2006; Green & Riddell, 2001; Jewsiewicki, 2004). New immigrants, who will soon account for nearly all of the population growth in Canada are understood to offer an important source of new labour — specifically highly skilled labour — that is needed if Canada is to maintain the workforce considered necessary to sustain the Canadian quality of life (*Age & Employment, Canada, 2007*).

As potential immigrants, international graduates¹ comprise a substantial pool (about 30,000 graduates annually²) of the kind of talent and experience that Canada is trying to attract globally. Upon completion of their post-secondary studies in Canada, international graduates are not only highly skilled, they also have developed important forms of social capital including having lived in Canada for many years and grown comfortable with Canadian ways of living and practice. With such a pool of human resources potentially available to Canada, the following two questions must be raised:

(1) How well is Canada engaging international graduates in the Canadian labour force?

(2) How does Canada's approach to attracting international students to work in Canada compare to what is being offered by other countries with which Canada competes in the global marketplace?

OVERVIEW OF THIS SECTION. This section briefly highlights elements of the global and national context which is generating a policy response in Canada, the outcome of which plays a significant role in encouraging or discouraging international graduates from staying in Canada to work and live permanently.

GLOBALIZING FORCES AND CANADIAN RESPONSE.

Globalization, as argued by many, is irreversible, but the ways in which the sociological, political, economic, cultural, and technological elements of globalization interact at the national level can vary. Countries therefore, need to remain competitive vis-à-vis their trading partners and, at the same time, they face the inevitable prospect of making clear the values which define their individual national character, as these values determine in large measure the effectiveness of policy and practice.

According to the Conference Board of Canada:

For countries needing a sustainable quality of life especially during the various phases of globalization, there are diverse voices to be heard³, a reconciliation of policy goals and tools to be undertaken, and collective commitments to be made that will build a Canadian labour force that has the talent, skills, and resiliency needed to support this country in the 21st century (Conference Board of Canada, 2006).

1. In this report the terms "international graduate," "international student," and "foreign student" are used interchangeably. However these terms all refer to the category of temporary resident admitted to Canada for the purposes of studying at an approved institution. It is noted that some international students attend primary and/or secondary school, but this report concerns itself only with those students who attend post-secondary (and vocational) institutions.

2. CBIE, 2004,p. 2

3. New Canadian Voices: A Contribution to Canada's International Policy Review (2004)

In the simplest of terms, policy is considered the instrument that not only attempts to solve problems; it does so based on values, beliefs, and assumptions which themselves are not neutral. During the Liberal government in the mid-1990s, then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was among those who made this inter-relationship between national character and labour market policy transparent. He stated:

The Canadian way entails an abiding national commitment to sharing prosperity and opportunity; to the belief that economic success and social success go hand in hand, and that all Canadians should be afforded the means and chance to fulfill their individual potential and to contribute to a higher Canadian standard of living and a better quality of life (Canada Gazette, 2006).

LABOUR MARKET SHORTAGES. Compelling evidence (Statistics Canada, 2007) has been brought forward by social and economic diagnosticians that present a picture of looming labour market shortages. The current and emerging labour shortfall (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2007; Pereira *et al*, 2007) is being driven by a combination of factors, of which two have been found to inflict the most damage: (1) a large, aging baby boomer generation, which has begun to withdraw from the labour force taking with it high levels of professional skill and experience; and (2) a less than adequate replacement birth rate. A recent OECD report demonstrates the magnitude of the problem associated with the effects of aging on the labour force in Canada:

...the proportion of the population aged 65 and over to the working age (24-64) population [is] expected to rise from 20% in 2004 to 45% by 2050.... (OECD, 2005).

The Canadian labour market is experiencing unprecedented changes, and numerous reports from different sectors identify labour and skills shortage as a critical issue facing this country. An international survey of nearly 33,000 employers across 23 countries and regions (including 1,000 employers in Canada) revealed that the labour and skills shortage is seen as more serious in Canada than in the rest of the industrialized world (Beauchesne, 2006). The survey reported that 66% of employers in Canada confirmed having difficulties filling positions due to a lack of suitable talent, a figure well above the 40% of employers globally. In addition, two recent studies on Canada's labour market provide further evidence regarding the shortage. Human Resources and Social Development Canada (2007) noted that there are currently labour shortages in the following sectors: health,

management, oil and gas, some occupations in the trades, in particular home builders and renovators, information technology (i.e. computer engineers and software engineers), in the social sciences (university teachers) and in the public service. Conversely, the report noted there are currently indications of a labour surplus in occupations specific to the primary sectors, in processing, manufacturing and utilities, sales and service occupations, and among office equipment operators. Moreover, Pereira *et al* (2007) pointed out that "the effects of a tightening labour market are already starting to be felt across all sectors of the economy and all regions in the country."

Shortages of the magnitude described above threaten the position of privilege that Canada has enjoyed in the world. In recognizing this situation, the stakeholder federal government departments — i.e. CIC, CBSA and HRSDC⁴ — have been working with organizations included in their "critical partnership." This partnership includes (but is not necessarily limited to) the provincial and territorial governments (all of which have some sort of formal agreement on immigration with the federal government), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based service providers, voluntary organizations, universities and colleges, and employers in the private sector, all of which actively participate in the policy formulation process (CIC, 2006).

The strategic policy response focuses primarily on the following two areas: 1) the Retiree Labour Pool; and (2) Brain Circulation. This report will now briefly examine each area in turn, after which the climate for recruiting foreign students will then be examined.

RETIREE LABOUR POOL. While recognizing that it will have to replace and enrich the scope and depth of expertise supplied by the baby boomer generation, the Canadian government has begun developing policies and providing incentives designed to maintain a measure of engagement in the Canadian labour force past the typical retirement age.⁵

What is not yet clear, however, is how effective these efforts will be. Given the mobility choices now available to retired persons, it may not be easy for Canada to make it sufficiently attractive for many potential retirees to either stay at or return to work. Those individuals most likely to leave the country are the people with the resources to do so and with the skills and experiences that the country needs.

4. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA); Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC).

5. In countries where growth of labour force depends heavily on new immigrants, new strategies are being developed. See section 3.

People retiring at the turn of the 21st century, if reasonably resourced, are likely to consider joining the “globally mobile,” and take their expertise and economic resources to other countries. At the same time, those workers likely to remain after the conventional retirement age⁶ are individuals with the least access to the necessary economic resources, and others working in occupations that do not require advanced post-secondary education.

BRAIN CIRCULATION⁷. The second part of the government’s strategy, given the limitations on Canada’s power to keep Canadians employed at home, has been to actively recruit highly skilled professionals from the international arena. In the global context, Canada’s ability to attract the “globally mobile” (of which international students are members) is not competitive. There are two reasons for this sobering reality. First, as this report will illustrate, other receiving countries as well as home countries are offering more attractive opportunities for international students to stay and work after graduation than does Canada. The second reason may be more salient. For generations, Northern countries have fueled their growth with the resources of the South. This inequitable relationship has begun to change as many emerging economic giants (e.g. China, India, and South Korea) are building their own economic strength, including educational infrastructures. The domestic demand for education, which once outstripped the capacity of many countries, is now being better served at

home, and countries previously identified as “Senders” are now launching their own international students’ programs, and have moved into the “Receivers” or “Hosts” group becoming net importers of mobile students. Among students who do leave home for higher education, a growing number are keen to return there following study, due to enhanced employment prospects in now booming economies.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT CLIMATE. The conventional sources for recruiting international students (and new immigrants for that matter) are changing (McHale, 2006), with the percentage of international students being attracted to Canada now remarkably low — less than 3% of international students who leave home to study abroad — far behind the comparative successes of the U.S. (22%), and U.K. (12%). Moreover, Canada has dropped out of the top five preferred study destinations and now ranks 14th in the OECD in terms of percentage of foreign students studying at its institutions (McHale, 2006). Canada trails Australia when it comes to the commercial impact of international education sector on the national economy (Birchard, 2006).

Canada, therefore, finds itself in a very challenging situation. To enhance its position, Canada needs to be extremely clear in its strategic direction and totally coordinated in its internal policy efforts. In an attempt to shed light on this issue, we now turn to the focus of the study.

6. Canadian labour laws do not specify a mandatory retirement age. See HRSDC website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca

7. For a basic discussion of the concept, see Jewsiewicki (2003).

SECTION TWO

THE PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

Supported by the Canadian Council on Learning (www.ccl-cca.ca) the purpose of this research was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of international graduates in Canada as they completed their studies and attempted to enter the Canadian labour market⁸. Placing international students at the heart of the research, the study attempted to understand the challenges facing international graduates as reported by students themselves, and as understood by representatives of institutional offices responsible for international students, and employers across Canada. Attempts were made to include the responses of a variety of employers who had experience with hiring or had considered hiring international graduates. Unlike the project carried out in the Atlantic Provinces (Adlain, 2006), where regional employers participated in the project, employers contacted for this study declined to officially comment, to be individually interviewed or to complete a six-item survey (see Appendix 3). However, representatives of Canadian and multinational companies participating in a national conference were generous in their contributions to an informal discussion of the issues, and it is on the basis of this discussion that employer concerns are reported. Employer views are provided throughout this document.

The research had two main objectives:

- (1) To credibly present the voices of international students and recent graduates; and
- (2) To contribute to Canada's efforts to build its capacity to attract and encourage international graduates to stay and work here.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS. We were initially guided by the following questions, which over the iterative research process, became increasingly more complex:

1. How well is Canada doing in attracting and retaining international graduates?
2. Why do the majority of the international students, seemingly positioned for career success, not elect to stay in Canada after graduation?

3. What concerns do employers have about hiring international graduates?
4. Which policies restrict and which facilitate the transition of international graduates into the Canadian labour force?
5. What are post-secondary institutions doing to assist international graduates with the transition to working in Canada?
6. How do the efforts of Canada to engage and retain international graduates compare to the strategies being employed in other countries?
7. What can be learned from the study that can make a contribution to an overall national strategy on the attraction and retention of international graduates?

ETHICS. This study received ethical clearance from Queen's University's General Research Ethics Board. As a national study, the researchers originally thought that one ethical clearance awarded by the Queen's General Research Ethics Board would in most instances be considered sufficient to allow students enrolled at other institutions to participate. Unfortunately, the process was much more complicated. The Research Ethics Boards at nearly every institution required the submission of a completely new or amended ethics application and the issuance of an institution-specific letter of ethical clearance. This time-consuming process delayed the launch of the study by six months (nearly half of the entire research period) and likely reduced the number of international students and graduates contacted about the study.⁹ Twenty ethics reviews were successfully completed.

METHOD. With a study of this scope and complexity, a methodology was required that would invite and accommodate various types of data, worldviews and lived experiences. The range of people involved in the study included international graduates, post-secondary institution representatives, and to some extent employers. Using a conceptual approach that recognized how

8. The research proposal was developed by the Canadian Bureau for International Education in collaboration with Dr. Sheryl Bond.

9. Having witnessed the disabling effects of multiple ethics review requirements, we believe research which is national in scope requires its own ethical review process.

culture and context give meaning to personal experience, multiple methods were employed, including a web-based survey, interviews, stories, archival data and case studies. Quantitative analyses of closed response questions (survey) included running frequencies, cross tabs and ANOVAs. Analysis of the qualitative interview data was more complicated, and required developing a protocol that was followed by the researcher who served as moderator for all focus group interviews.

Questions included on the focus group protocol (Appendix 2) grew out of the findings from the national web-based survey. Facilitator notes were recorded immediately following each interview. Wherever possible, a second observer was employed to observe and take notes, and to participate in a debriefing. All interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were read by all research team members; and although one researcher was assigned to prepare the first detailed analysis, a second researcher carried out a separate analysis to address issues of inter-rater reliability. It should be noted that for a particular theme to be identified, it needed to be raised frequently during the actual interviews. Decisions regarding the choice of which quotes would be included were made based on the application of one or both of the following criteria: (1) Ability to convey both the tone and the content which represents a large number of contributions, and (2) Ability to raise substantially new thinking and experiences, and provide insight into the diversity represented by interview participants.

DATA COLLECTION. Data were collected from international students who participated in the web-based survey and/or the various forms of interview processes offered. In addition, and to develop a broader understanding of the issues facing international students, researchers also interviewed International Student Advisers (ISAs) and in some cases, the Directors of Career Services. The process used to identify volunteers to participate in the study is described next.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND GRADUATE PARTICIPANTS. CBIE was instrumental in broadcasting an announcement of the study and its purposes. This announcement was distributed to ISAs through CBIE's listservs. The URL for the web-based survey — including the related Letter of Information/Consent which was embedded in the opening web page — was included in the announcement. A surprising discovery at the outset of this research was that few ISAs had access to the e-mail addresses of the international students enrolled at their institution. Privacy and possible harassment by researchers were some of the justifications offered as to why the e-mail addresses of

all students were centrally protected. ISAs, therefore, were not able to distribute the announcement to all international students at their respective institutions. As a result, the only students to directly receive the announcement were those who had at one point in time voluntarily registered with the International Office (or its equivalent on campus), and included their e-mail address in their registration. In addition to the general announcement that was distributed, ISAs on selected campuses were asked to post an invitation for up to ten international students and graduates to participate in a focus group or individual interviews.

DATA SOURCES. In an effort to gain an in-depth and careful understanding of the issues facing international students, the researchers sought out and included multiple data sources with potentially different perspectives on the same issues. Therefore, in addition to interview and questionnaire data, additional data were obtained from the participating education institutions, provided by the ISAs and Career Counselors. Observations and notes were maintained throughout the research process and maintained in a research journal; journal entries were used as a source of data when other sources were not available. The two main sources of data are now explained in turn.

- **WEB-BASED SURVEY.**

The web-based survey generated a total of 915 submissions. The 56 items on the survey were developed based on the findings from an extensive literature review carried out for North America, Europe, Australia and Japan. The 900 useable surveys generated rich and meaningful accounts of the experiences of international students from 121 countries who are currently registered or recently graduated from 20 colleges and universities in Canada.

- **FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS.**

The survey findings resulted in new questions which then generated the protocol used for both the focus groups and the individual interviews. In an attempt to access different perspectives on the issues, participants in this phase of the study were comprised of international graduates, ISAs, Career Services Directors and Vice-Presidents. A total of 25 students participated in the focus group interviews on five college and university campuses. An additional five students chose to be interviewed individually.

Before proceeding directly to the results, it is useful to review policies in Canada and in a selection of countries active in the international education sector.

SECTION THREE

POLICY SNAPSHOTS

OVERVIEW OF SECTION. This section will highlight policies and practices that governments have in place which affect the extent to which foreign students can not only gain admission and study in countries of their choice, but also, and more importantly, the extent to which they can work and ultimately opt to stay permanently after their studies. The section is divided into two parts.

The first part deals with the Canadian context, with emphasis on the policies and practices of the federal government. While the researchers recognize that education is a provincial and territorial matter, and acknowledge that there is extensive provincial and territorial involvement in issues affecting foreign students, an examination of this aspect of the issue is beyond the scope of the present study. As a result, the recommendations focus on the federal domain.

Part two of the section examines three countries — the U.S., the U.K. and Australia — chosen because they outpace Canada vis-à-vis international student matters.

CANADA

“...Immigration is part of the Canadian mythology. After all, our nation is built by immigrants, from the 17th-century French explorers on the St. Lawrence and British settlers of the 1800s, to the waves of Europeans who poured onto the Prairies at the turn of the last century and then into our mines and factories after the Second World War...” (Marina Jiménez, The Globe and Mail, December 12 2005).

Since the late 1990s a number of advocacy groups have been urging the Canadian government to start looking at international students not merely as cultural and academic assets and a timely source of revenue, but also as a readily available skilled labour force from which to secure future permanent residents. More recently, these groups, many of whom are members of CIC’s “critical partnership” (CIC, 2006), have been vocal and persistent in calling for the federal government to ease the immigration restrictions on international students, particularly with respect to their ability to work in Canada during and after their studies, and to become permanent residents once they graduate (e.g.

see AUCC, 2001; Cormode, 2002). The federal government has acknowledged and attempted to respond to concerns. However we suggest that these efforts have not gone far enough. The regulations remain complicated, applying for permits is confusing and time-consuming, and processing can be sluggish and sometimes heavy-handed.¹⁰

CANADA AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

The majority of the arguments in favour of these policy improvements remain firmly rooted in the historical discourse regarding economic growth, demographic considerations, and overall global competitiveness (Peykov, 2004). The 1990s, however, witnessed a particular interest in the commoditization of education and its revenue generation benefits (DeVoretz, 2002). Education administrators continue to voice their strong concerns with respect to Canada’s freefalling competitive stance as a destination for international students (Birchard, 2006).

More recent calls for change, however, have started focusing on the potential benefits of having foreign students as skilled migrants contributing to the global competitiveness of Canada as a leader in cutting-edge industries (McHale, 2006; DeVoretz, 2005; Peykov, 2004; CBIE, 2002). However, debate and controversy on many facets of this issue continues, especially with regard to the future of the Canadian labour market. Two specific areas are examined here: 1) Regional Settlement; and 2) The “Brain Drain” or Mobility Crisis in Canada.

REGIONAL SETTLEMENT. Policymakers are keen to have more international graduates living and working in the various regions of Canada. They agree that in order to attract international students to study and eventually reside permanently in the regions, that is, outside the major cities (Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver — known as MTV), the government needs to make it easier for them to apply for permanent residence, similar to the model already in place in Australia (Cormode, 2001). At present, international graduates from institutions within MTV may work for only one year post-graduation, while those from institutions outside MTV may obtain an additional year of post-graduation work for a total of two years — but not if they move to MTV.

10. In some cases, non-compliance is an illegal act. Examples can be found in the *Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement for the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (2002) which provides for a number of punitive measures (e.g. refusals to renew documents, etc.).

While proponents argue that this approach should help relieve regional skills shortages, others are concerned that efforts to encourage regional settlement may backfire if graduates cannot find suitable jobs and are discouraged from going to “MTV”. Moreover, Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver institutions are disadvantaged, becoming less attractive as host institutions for prospective international students.

THE “BRAIN DRAIN” OR MOBILITY CRISIS. Even more controversy surrounds the labour shortage argument; some suggest that there is a brain drain or mobility crisis occurring in Canada, with much of the emigration heading to the United States, a situation that, if not addressed, will seriously harm Canada’s long-term competitiveness (Jewsiewicki, 2003). However recent studies suggest that this concern is overstated (BTMM, 2005; Finnie, 2006). In a study by the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montréal (BTMM), the conclusion was that while Montréal tends to lose some graduates to other regions, the “brain drain” from that city is limited. Finnie (2006) notes that departure rates from Canada have been historically low and have not in fact changed as dramatically over time as the raw data might suggest.

GOVERNMENT POLICY RESPONSES. Historically, the concern of being accused of aiding and abetting the “brain drain” from developing countries was central to Canadian immigration policy with respect to international students (Cormode, 2001). More recently these concerns have been deeply discounted as the Canadian government has adopted the “brain circulation” paradigm of international student mobility (DeVoretz, 2005) and has now embraced some of the competitiveness and economic arguments (McHale, 2006).

The federal government has responded with concrete actions. Since the 1990s full-time international students have been permitted to work on campus without a work permit. In 2005, CIC extended the post-graduation work permit from one to two years, with the exception of the three major cities, as noted above. In 2006, CIC announced an off-campus work program allowing foreign students (in possession of a study permit) to work off campus for up to 20 hours per week during the school year, and full-time during study breaks. All of these programs are applicable to students at public post-secondary institutions.

For international students and advocates on their behalf, these are favourable outcomes. However federal policy and practice regarding international students continue to present formidable barriers for international students (Peykov, 2004) in at least the following three major areas: 1) Working in

Canada; 2) Remaining in Canada and 3) Dealing with the Canadian government on immigration matters.

WORKING IN CANADA. While regulations have been relaxed sufficiently to allow international students to work both on and off campus during their studies, a number of conditions apply (refer to the table below). Moreover, when it comes to employment that will contribute to their staying in Canada, international students find themselves in a challenging situation (Peykov, 2004). This is in contrast to comments by the former Immigration Minister, the Honorable Monte Solberg, who stated: “[International Students should be able to]...compete for off-campus jobs on a level-playing field with their Canadian peers...” (CIC Speaking Notes, 2006).

A majority of international students present in Canada perceive that they are receiving mixed messages from the government. In the first instance post-graduate employment is vital if international students are to get much needed work experience in order to stay in Canada. However, they must obtain an offer of employment and apply for and obtain a work permit within a 90-day period – which has often proven too little time for a successful job search. Students frequently report to their institutions that they have lost opportunities because a prospective employer was unwilling to wait for the work permit to arrive. Another irritant is the MTV exclusion from the second year of employment; some students indicate that they are less interested in staying in Canada at all if it is only for a one-year period. Moreover there is some concern about what happens after the post-graduation employment period – will there be a labour market opinion required that may force the employer to advertise the position held by the international graduate, even if the employer wishes to retain the latter’s services (Peykov, 2004)?

REMAINING IN CANADA. Current government policy indicates a strong interest in having international students stay permanently in Canada. Former Immigration Minister Solberg stated in 2006: “[International Students] are young, motivated people with Canadian qualifications and now, potentially, Canadian work experience – and we send them home when their student visa expires. Many of these young people may wish to stay and accept jobs in Canada. I want to look at giving them that opportunity...”

However this positive intention is undercut in its practical implementation. A case in point is the typical wording that appears on documentation that, while accurate, unintentionally confuses and conveys an unwelcoming message. The key message on the study permit is that the student must depart from Canada as of a certain date unless he or she extends or changes status by applying for and

receiving another document. Other key messages advise that the study permit does not permit work in Canada and re-entry to Canada. The underlying message is that a different permit is needed for work and a visa may be needed for re-entry, but that is not clear. What is clear is that the document contains a lot of negatives — not the kind of message that makes Canada a particularly attractive place at first glance, and this is one of the first messages received by an incoming international student.

The requirement to leave is, therefore, explicit and top of mind for the immigration official issuing the study permit and the international student receiving it on arrival. It begs the question: Does Canada really want international students to consider staying when, as soon as they arrive, they are instructed to leave in such an explicit way?

Other 'Departure-from-Canada' related directives include the possibility of being "asked to leave" or removed and/or banned from Canada for violating the conditions of admission (Canada Gazette, 2002). These rules, as shown on the permits, primarily have to do with school attendance, employment, and permit renewal. It is therefore questionable whether such infractions truly merit removal and/or being banned from re-entering Canada in the future, unless of course there are security considerations. Even with these documents, the holder does not have any assurances of being allowed to re-enter Canada if for any reason the student has to travel outside of the country for legitimate reasons.

DEALING WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. The regulations and actions of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) seem to reflect a lingering yet powerful discourse within the Canadian government at the highest levels that is distrustful of visitors to Canada (Campbell, 1989, Hawkins, 1988). One fear is that individuals, who are legally admitted to Canada as students or other short-term visitors, may choose to remain beyond the time permitted by Canadian law, go underground, and become illegal aliens (Dirks, 2007). Another concern is that Canadian employers will operate "...a guest worker program unsanctioned by government" which will take away jobs from Canadians and permanent residents (*Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, 2002). While it is estimated that there may be as many as 200,000 individuals illegally living in Canada (Dirks, 2007), there is no indication as to how many — or how few — of those individuals entered Canada on a study permit.

MIXED MESSAGES. For Canada to effectively engage the "globally mobile," it needs to update its policies and change the message it sends out to the world. In a review of a wide range of public websites, including those of the Government of Canada and of CIC, the latter specifically designed to communicate with international students and Canadian employers, very few consistent messages could be identified. In fact, it was found that the more web pages consulted, the more confusing the policy messages became. For example, the policies announced on the student web page of the CIC website were welcoming, but that is not the message on the employer web pages of the CIC site: on those pages, the standard policy "all students must leave" still appears (www.cic.ca, June 2007). Hence, while Canadian immigration policy is most certainly in transition, what the current overarching policy might be remains unclear.

COMPETING POLICIES GENERATE FRUSTRATIONS. Although there are some dissenting voices, the majority agree that international students have historically contributed to Canada's well being and will continue to do so in the future. The current changes being made to attract and retain international students in Canada represent essential first steps. At the same time policymakers need to recognize the contradictions between stated policy objectives and their implementation, leading to a series of day-to-day frustrations felt by international students who really want to work in Canada and make this country their permanent home, but find it challenging to do so.

OTHER COUNTRIES

While there is limited research comparing Canada's immigration policies and practices relating to international students and graduates with those of major competitors, an important study by Johnston in 2000 revealed that Australia, New Zealand, France, and the U.K. have developed comprehensive strategies to attract and retain foreign students. Three policy similarities were identified across these countries:

- Implementation of policies to actively encourage prospective foreign students from "low-risk" countries¹¹ to access the host country educational system while visiting, and then to apply for permission to study without having to leave the country;
- Improved part-time work opportunities for international students while studying, as well as streamlined work permit processing, in some cases eliminating the need for a permit (in the case of the U.K.); and

11. "Low-risk" in terms of the tendency of nations from countries prone to unacceptable rates of fraud, non-compliance with entry conditions, and non-return to home country upon expiry visa/study permit/or duration of stay. Of course, not everybody agrees with this definition of "low risk". Reikai (2002, p. 17), for example, claims that "since September 11, 2001, the definition of a "good risk" for the purpose of issuance of a visitor visa or student permit to Canada or the United States has changed dramatically." The reason suggested is that "the weakest link in North American border security lay in the admission and monitoring of tourists, international students, business people and other temporary entrants." (p. 15)

Table 1. Work/Stay Possibilities for International Students in Canada

OPTION	REGULATIONS
Work During An Academic/Training Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work in Canada while on a Study Permit, international students must be engaged in full-time study at a participating university, community college, CEGEP, publicly funded trade/technical school or at a private institution authorized by provincial statute to confer degrees, and • Have a valid Study Permit • Maintain full-time registration status • Not be a participant in or in receipt of a Canadian government/NGO scholarship or other forms of sponsorship; not in an ESL/FSL program; and not be an exchange or visiting student
Co-op and Internships	<p>A Work Permit is required; however it may be an “open” Permit issued for the same duration as the Study Permit, with the educational institution listed as the employer. The opportunity must be tied to the student’s area of specific competency and the employment cannot exceed 50% of the total program of study</p>
On-campus Work	<p>International students are eligible to apply for on-campus positions and can work up to 20 hours per week during the school year and full time during breaks and holidays (including summer vacation). Competition is strong. No Work Permit is usually required</p>
Off-campus Work	<p>International students can now work off campus for up to 20 hours a week during studies and full time during breaks and holidays. The work opportunity does not have to be in the student’s field of specialization. A Work Permit is required.</p>
Post-graduation Work	<p>International students who have completed a degree and hold a valid Study Permit may apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit for a period of up twelve months (if working in Vancouver, Toronto, or Montréal) or up to 24 months (if working in any other site in Canada) after the degree has been granted. The permit will not be issued for a length of time that exceeds the length of the study program. This permit will only be issued once and at the end date the student must either have secured Permanent Residency/Citizenship or leave the country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have a job offer from an employer for a job that is related to studies • Must have a valid Study Permit when applying for a Work Permit • Students have 90 days following the issuance of the final grades and confirmation of graduation to get a Letter of Employment from an employer and apply for a Post-Graduation Work Permit • If a student cannot get a Letter of Employment within 90 days, s/he will have to leave Canada no later than the date which appears on the Study Permit
Provincial/Territorial Nominee Program	<p>This joint program between the federal and provincial/territorial governments allows for the latter to nominate skilled workers in priority job sectors/categories to be considered for permanent residence. International students can participate as a separate category has been established for them within this program; albeit the number of spaces is limited</p>
Highly Skilled Professional Entry	<p>International students can apply as any other independent applicants for permanent residence to Canada in this category. Under the points system students may earn extra points if they managed to accumulate career-relevant work experience in Canada</p>
Permanent Residence/ Citizenship	<p>This route to permanent residence is open to anyone to apply. Permanent residents can apply for Canadian citizenship after they have accumulated a minimum of three years actual residence in Canada</p>

- Enhanced permanent residence opportunities for international students following the completion of study (Johnston, 2000).

Observations from the same study regarding Canada include:

- Canada is the only case-study country not to have adopted a government-wide approach to international education or international student recruitment;
- Canada is the only country not to allow people on a visitor visa (which includes ESL and FSL students) to change their visa status to international student from within its borders;
- Canada's medical exam requirements for international students are not as universally applied as they are in Australia. However, with the notable exception of Canada's medical exam pilot project in target market countries (which mirrors the standard procedure in Australia), Canada has the longest medical exam processing times;
- Canada has the longest student visa processing times, likely due in part to the medical exam processing times;
- Unlike Australia, the United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand, Canada has not entered into any formal arrangements with NGOs or educational institutions to streamline the student visa process in key target markets.

To begin mapping a comprehensive strategic policy regarding foreign students, it is useful to review in detail the actions of other nations engaged in this activity. The remainder of this section provides a general description of the policies of three countries — the U.S., U.K. and Australia — regarding the attraction and retention of international students. These nations were selected for comparison because the first two significantly outpace Canada in their market share of international students (McHale, 2006), and the third, Australia, is ahead of Canada with respect to the financial contribution of international education to the national economy (Birchard, 2006).

It is important to note that the comparisons highlighted here are confined only to the policy specifics which allow foreign students to work and to stay permanently in each respective nation. Further, in reading the details surrounding the activities of these three governments, the reader should take

care when reviewing strategies and opportunities offered by each country as these are reflective, in part, of each country's social values political pressures and government priorities. Lastly, changes in this area of government policy continue to evolve across the countries examined in this study including Canada; as a result, the observations made at the time of writing of this report are subject to change.

UNITED STATES. The United States allows visitors to hold one of three categories of non-immigrant visa for the purposes of study.¹² After one year of study, students holding the more common F-1 visa may work off-campus up to 20 hours per week during academic terms and full time during vacations and between terms. The work permit is authorized by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) through the International Student Adviser Office. These students also may work on campus at any time without requiring any permission.

F-1 visa holders, after one year of study, are also eligible to work full-time for up to one year after graduation as part of their "practical training". After practical training, international graduates must be sponsored by an employer in order to continue working in the United States. On the other hand, M1 students may only undertake temporary employment for practical training purposes (Speed, 2007; Career Center of Ohio State University).

Some F-1 and J-1 visa holders [international students] may be eligible to change their status in the U.S. and acquire an H-1B visa, a non-immigrant temporary working visa, which allows the holder to work in the U.S. for a period of up to six years. In order to qualify for this visa though, the student must first have a job offer and an employer who is willing to file a "petition" or request with the INS. Note that the H-1B visa is reserved for individuals in "specialty occupations." An attorney is usually hired, either by the student or the employer, in order to file for this category of visa.

According to the Career Center at Ohio State University, international students face a number of major challenges in finding a job. The first is the complexities involved in the hiring process outlined above. Many would-be employers feel intimidated or simply refuse to engage in this process. Other hurdles include: the need for a lawyer, processing fees, time restrictions (12-month window), and a negative perception of the impact that international graduates have on the U.S. labour market.

12. Non-U.S. citizens studying in the US are granted one of the following three visas: (1) F-1, or Student Visa (most common);(2) J-1 (Exchange Visitor); or (3) M-1,(non academic or vocational). For more details, consult the "educationUSA" page on the US Department of State website at <http://educationusa.state.gov/usvisa.htm>

UNITED KINGDOM. International students in the U.K. can take part-time or holiday work, but they cannot work more than 20 hours per week, take a full-time job (except in vacations), or be self-employed (Johnston, 2000)¹³.

Previously, (i.e. since 2004) only science and engineering students could stay and work for up to one year after graduation. The program was expanded in May 2007 to include all international students (*Education Guardian*, 2007). The major disadvantage of the system, according to Speed (2007) is the following:

“...the permission granted is limited and any time spent in one of these schemes does not lead to settlement. Also, if the employer applies for a work permit after the initial 12 months granted, this application would strictly require a resident labour test. If the employee has worked for the employer for more than six months, it may be possible to persuade the Border & Immigration Agency to waive the advertising requirement, but this cannot be guaranteed.”

Similarly, the Fresh Talent — Working in Scotland Scheme¹⁴, established in 2005, allows international students who have lived in Scotland and graduated from a Scottish University to apply to stay for two years in the U.K. (Scotland has now reached its lowest population since the first half of the 20th century.) At the end of the two years, they may switch into work permit employment, provided the work permit is for employment in Scotland, or in another “relevant immigration category” (Speed, 2007).

The employer-sponsored work permit is another option for international students. Employers who have “demonstrated to the Border & Immigration Agency that they undertake a full campaign each year to attract top graduates through advertising in student publications, and participate in milk-round recruitment and the like...” (Speed, 2007) can ask for a five-year permit that is tied with the particular employer but can be changed to another employer who meets the criteria (Speed, 2007).

AUSTRALIA. Boosting the number of international students selecting Australia as their study destination is a major driver of that government's strategic plan for

“internationalizing” the education industry. In 2003, the government committed more than \$113 million (AUS) to this strategy; and since then there have been several policies put in place to achieve the government's long-term objectives. The most important was the \$41 million commitment to the expansion of the Australia Education International network (AEI). Operating from within the Department of Education, AEI oversees and coordinates all policies and activities related to international students. AEI's mandate extends over a wide geographic area and includes a vast range of activities¹⁵.

Furthermore, international students who are studying for more than one year can work off-campus up to 20 hours per week and full-time during holidays. They need permission from Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) to work.

With respect to working after graduation and staying in Australia, the Australian government has moved to clear the way for international students. “In 2001, the Australian government began allowing foreign students who have graduated from certain programs [...] to apply for permanent residence without leaving the country. To be eligible for permanent residence as skilled workers, foreign students have their credentials assessed by the relevant professional bodies and not the government...” (Peykov, 2004:p.17).

In a 2007 presentation, a representative of AEI indicated that the Australian immigration department had a detailed program designed to integrate foreign graduates into the labour force. This included sending immigration officers into the field to speak to employers and fully apprise them of the importance of hiring foreign graduates and of the ease with which this can be done. As a result, a substantial number of foreign graduates have been engaged in Australia over the past few years.

Overall, these three countries are moving quickly and with strategic direction to admit and retain international students. The U.K. and Australia, notably, may offer models for Canada.

13. The UK policy on international students does not allow: “...work for more than twenty hours per week during term time, except in the case of an agreed work placement or internship; engage in business, self-employment or provide services as a professional sportsperson or entertainer; [or] pursue a career by filling a permanent full-time vacancy.” (Peykov, 2004: p. 17)

14. See www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/working_in_the_uk/en/homepage/schemes_and_programmes/fresh_talent__working.html

15. For more on AEI see their website: <http://aei.dest.gov.au>

SECTION FOUR

STUDENTS' VOICES: SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

"I love this country. It is peaceful and safe and provides its citizens such a good life. I have dreamed of studying in Canada. I have worked hard for three years. My grades are high, my English is good. I have been on internships associated with my studies and I have volunteered with several groups, including the elderly. My degree is in computer science and I thought I would have no problem getting a job in my field. Was I ever mistaken!" (One student's lament.)

OVERVIEW OF THIS SECTION. This section is presented in two parts. The first describes the profile of the students participating in our survey (age, gender and program of study). The second part takes up two of the original research questions along with the findings which emerged. Presented as themes, the findings of the sources of data taken together are analyzed and discussed. A key component of the section is a series of policy changes that international students and graduates would recommend to Canada's Prime Minister, if given the chance to do so.

AGE AND GENDER. The age of the students participating in this study is best expressed as a bimodal distribution where the numbers of students between the ages of 18-23 is nearly equal to the numbers of students between the ages of 24-31. Those from 18-23 were most likely to be in undergraduate or diploma/certificate programs, and students from 24-31 were most likely to be graduate students. Moreover, women accounted for 51% of the total number of students participating, a figure which is similar to their proportion in the general population of international students.

DISTRIBUTION ACROSS CANADA. It should be noted that although the foreign students in this sample came from post-secondary institutions in seven provinces (see Table 2), the majority of them are actually studying and/or working in Ontario (52%) and Quebec (20%). Given the limited participation from the Atlantic region, a decision was made to introduce, where and if appropriate (and not otherwise found by the current study) findings from a recent Halifax study on labour force transition of international students (Adlain, 2006).

FIELDS OF STUDY. The diversity of international students is evident when examining their fields of study. Once the data were organized into the following categories — Arts & Humanities, Engineering, Professional Programs (e.g. Business), Science, and Social Science — it is evident that the percentage of students surveyed who are in fields that produce the kind of highly skilled workers that Canada needs (e.g. sciences, engineering, computer sciences) is actually larger in the study than in the national profile. What may not be immediately clear is that when put in rank order, the fields

STUDENT PROFILE

Table 2. Diversity in the Student Population by Province/Type of Institution/Field

Province	Type of PSE Institution	Field of Study
British Columbia <1%	College 10%	Arts & Humanities 17%
New Brunswick <1%	Institute 1%	Engineering 8%
Newfoundland 7%	University 85%	Science 19%
Nova Scotia 3%	Univ./College 2%	Social Science 19%
Ontario 52%	Other 2%	Professional 25%
Quebec 20%		Unanswered 3%

studied by women in the study are significantly different from the fields studied by men. Table 3 illustrates that women are more likely to graduate from Professional programs (e.g. business, education or nursing) or Arts & Humanities, while men are most likely to graduate from Engineering or Professional programs. This difference in fields of study may in part account for the difficulty female graduates reported encountering when they attempted to get a Post-Graduate Work Permit.

In order for international graduates to secure post-graduate employment, the potential employer must satisfactorily demonstrate to CIC that the international candidate has an educational background that matches the job. Students suggest that being able to make this match is much easier for graduates of fields such as Sciences and Engineering than it is for graduates of fields such as Anthropology or Psychology. One outcome of the policy requiring the job to fit the study field is that many women are distinctly disadvantaged. A separate study into gender-related issues and impacts of current policies related to the work opportunities for international graduates may be warranted.

Table 3. Field of Study/Gender/Rank Order

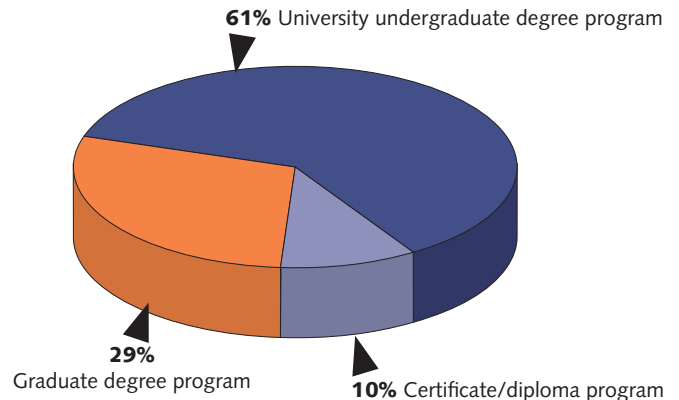
Fields	Women	Men
Professional Programs (e.g. Business)	1	2
Arts & Humanities	2	5
Social Sciences	3	4
Sciences	4	3
Engineering	5	1

UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE DISTRIBUTION.

The majority (61%) of students in our study was enrolled in four-year undergraduate programs (BA/BSc/Honours bachelor's); 10% were in certificate or diploma programs; and 29% were graduate students at either the Masters or Doctoral levels. One of the outcomes of this skewed distribution is that the undergraduate experience masks potentially different experiences experienced by foreign students in diploma or certificate programs. With the numbers of students from the college sector relatively low, a separate college-based study may be warranted. Table 4 shows the distribution of international graduates by level

of study, where level is understood conventionally to begin with certificate/diploma programs, moving up through undergraduate and ending with the PhD degree.

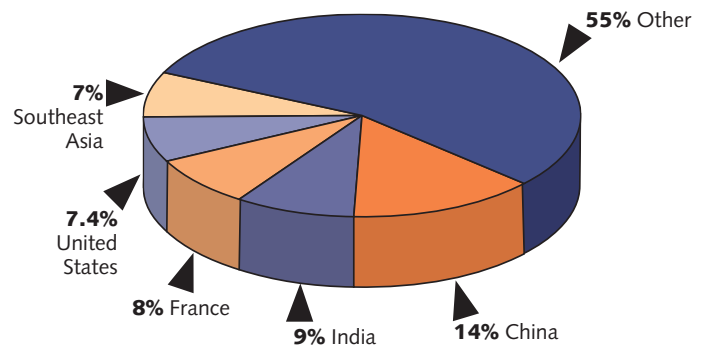
Table 4. Registration/Graduation by Level of Study



COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN. Another measure of the diversity of the students in this study is reflected in the 120 countries of origin which they represent (shown in Table 5). Looking closely at which countries contribute the largest number of international students/graduates in the study¹⁶, it became clear that there are relatively few students from a large number of countries and much larger numbers of students from only five countries and regions: China, India, France, United States, and South East Asia¹⁷.

It was anticipated that participants who, based on survey and focus group responses, reported being generally satisfied with their situation in Canada would bring diverse experiences and perspectives. Surprisingly, that was not the case. Instead, students spoke about their lives and the transition to employment in Canada in a single, strong voice. And what the students had to say is at the heart of the themes which are introduced in the next section.

Table 5. Country of Origin of Participants



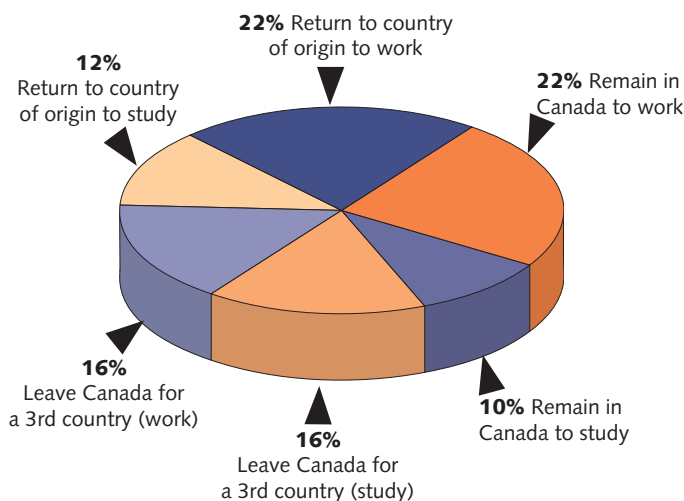
16. The distribution of the study's participants among the five countries/regions represented is similar to but not the same as that of the international student population in general.

17. Shown in rank order for students participating in the study.

THEME 1. Many international graduates will not try to stay in Canada despite the country's reported attractiveness. The formidable barriers, real or perceived, are such that graduates will seek out opportunities elsewhere.

Even with the fairly recent introduction of new or improved opportunities to get Canadian labour market experience, only a third of the students and graduates report that they will stay in Canada after graduation. Table 6 illustrates the sobering facts. Of the 66% percent of students reporting they plan to leave Canada on graduation, while 34% plan to return to their home country, 32% plan to go to a third country for advanced studies or work. Canada finds itself in a vulnerable position: not only will we lose two-thirds of our highly educated graduates as contributors to the labour force, we are losing half of this group to our trading partners and competitors.

Table 6. Post-Graduation Plans



RETURNING HOME. Students offered several compelling reasons for deciding to return to their home country after graduation. For some it had to do with being close to family; for others it is the relief of being back in their own culture. But for a majority of students, it is the good job prospects they believe await them upon their return, especially after having earned a qualification from a Canadian college or university, a fact which students reported gives them significant advantage over others in their respective home labour markets.

"The economy is booming in home countries (particularly in China and India), while it's improving in others. One's country of origin is playing a more important role in the global market."

"I have better career and financial opportunities to work in my country. My qualifications will be recognized and I won't have to constantly prove my intelligence to people who think I am not too bright because of my ethnicity."

"The skills I have acquired during my studies in Canada will be more valued in my country. I want to do something for my country with all the higher level skills I have obtained in Canada."

"In my home country, I can develop and promote interesting projects in the field of my study."

"I have always intended to work at home, the pay is better and I want to put my education to use for the betterment of my country."

"I believe that my country/continent has potential and that the brain drain from my country to the West is what makes us a sleeping giant. In light of this, I have taken it upon myself to reside in my country."

EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN CANADA. As important as the loyalties and opportunities of home may be, the threat of being rejected by (or worse, ejected from) Canada at the end of the study sojourn is sufficient for most international graduates not to invest their time and limited funds in trying to "get in and stay". Nearly 80% of students in this study were very pessimistic about their employment prospects in Canada.

"I want to get a job which suits my credentials and career aims. I don't want to be driving a taxi after getting a PhD or doing a clerical job, in which I can't use my expertise or knowledge."

"There are not many options for jobs for international students, as most employers need Canadian experience."

"I am studying Anthropology. How am I going to show that my studies are required to be a manager? I cannot even get a job (post-graduate) flipping burgers."

These findings suggest that international students want exactly what Canadian students want, that is to work and make a contribution to Canada. But most foreign students do not believe that Canada sees the merit in having international graduates stay. To make the point, in the middle of one of the focus groups, a male student laughed out loud, commenting:

"I just don't understand it. Why does Canada want all these new immigrants to come when we are already here and they want to send us home?"

ADVANTAGES OF STAYING IN CANADA. In response to questions about what Canada has to offer graduates, most students began their replies by comparing Canada to their home country. When the question was posed in the context of employment, a large number of students raised financial considerations (salaries, benefits and pensions) and the quality of the work environment, including ethical practices, as key attractions. While women ranked financial considerations just as highly as men, they also frequently mentioned that they are better treated in Canada than they would likely be in their home country.

WHAT MAKES CANADA ATTRACTIVE?

"Canada has a much better quality of life. The government is fair and demonstrates that to all of its citizens. People accept you for what you are and don't try to change you. It is a peaceful country and in my opinion better than elsewhere, including home."

"Because Canada is not at war with any country, I feel more safe and peaceful especially in Canada as compared to the United States."

"I wanted to learn different cultures, face some challenges, and become independent."

"I was interested in staying abroad and gaining global experience in matters of study, work, and culture."

When asked what they liked most about living in Canada in general, the responses from the students shifted from employment advantages to quality of life indicators with "security" being by far the most frequently

mentioned advantage. Following closely behind security is "multiculturalism" (reported most heavily by the majority of foreign students who live in Canada's major cities), along with the warmth and openness of the Canadian people.

The students generally see Canada as attractive, in contrast to their employment prospects here. It seems likely that, were processes and attitudes more favourable to them, more would choose to stay.

THEME 2. Here is what needs to be done, Mr. Prime Minister

From the student's point of view, there are serious deterrents within the Canadian government's policies and practices. Moreover, virtually all of them urged the government to make the system less punitive – for better or worse, this is how they see it now.

Students were asked to respond to the following question: "What would you tell Canada's Prime Minister if you had five minutes to spend with him?" The students had more to say about this question than almost any other.

"Make the work permit application simpler and quicker not just for the students but for Canadian employers."

"Issue an automatic work permit for one year after graduation to help deal with the employers who do not want to wait to hire a student until they get a permit."

"Offer work permits for up to two years after graduation. Employers prefer this as well as they are not prepared to wait for an international graduate to get his/her work permit which can take up to 90 days. There are other students around who the employers will hire to start to work right away."

"Allow employers the freedom to hire us without HRSDC approvals. Many employers don't want to get into that hassle even if they need to hire people in my field."

"Make it as easy for employers to hire an international graduate as it is to hire a domestic graduate. Right now the employers believe hiring an international student is not worth the time and effort. They go through all the hurdles and then the student

can only stay a year and it begins again. This way an international student is not worth the investment."

"Offer students who have completed a Canadian degree quicker process in applying and getting permanent resident status."

"If Canada wants employers to hire international students, then the federal government has to open up at least some of its own jobs and internships to international students as well. "Do as we say and not as we do" hurts international students. I have had several employers tell me the government isn't serious about wanting international students to work when their own policies set up obstacles for both the employer and the students. Why should I stay when it is clear I am not valued or wanted?"

"Change the policy so that people could work anywhere they wanted, as well as not necessarily in work related to one's major. We should be able to study whatever interests us and not be penalized for our choices because the job market for our discipline at the time of our graduation isn't flourishing. In addition, many jobs aren't related directly to academic disciplines to begin with and it's just ridiculous to try to match the job to the area of study. It does not work even for Canadians."

EMPLOYER CONCERNS. Using the opportunity presented by having a large number of employers attending a national conference, we made arrangements to make a presentation of the early results of the study. Around 20 career educators and employers attended this presentation. Data from the discussion which followed the presentation were recorded in the research journal. Representing multinational companies and human resource directors of medium-size companies, the employers' perspectives and concerns clearly enriched the study's understanding of the issues facing international students. Only one question was posed: What are your concerns, if any, about hiring international graduates?

The discussion was energetic. Concerns included:

- Confusing and inconsistent government policies
- Communication silos
- Lack of up-to-date information available to employers
- The perceived need at some companies to hire a lawyer to protect the company from risk associated with hiring an international graduate
- The inability of a job candidate to start work when a job offer is made; the possible delay of months before a work permit is issued disadvantages the graduate.
- Current limitations on the Post-Graduate Work Permit to one (or at most two years)
- Given that the Canadian headquarters of many multinational and other companies are located in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver (cities in which international graduates are limited to one year of work), employers felt particularly disadvantaged when they wanted to hire an international graduate.
- Inconsistent information or misinformation circulating about the rules and regulations for hiring an international graduate.

Note that these concerns were recorded as entries in the research journal and are not direct quotations linked to any one person.

A senior representative of a large, multi-national company pointed out that:

"On the CIC website designed for employers, it still reads that international graduate students must leave. So, what has changed?"

This comment generated further discussion as to whether the government of Canada was serious about wanting more international graduates to live and work in Canada and, if so, what the government was prepared to do about it? Many of the employers volunteered that *they did not even know they could now hire international graduates* (research journal notes).

It was clear, however, that at least some of the employers in the discussion had hired international graduates or had sought legal advice about doing so. For this self-identified group, the most serious barrier was United States' border policy.

"Multinational corporations, which have headquarters in the U.S. or otherwise do business in the U.S., require their employees to be in the U.S. for meetings or other work-related business often with little advance warning. For Canadian employees, this is not a problem. For international graduates, it takes too much time to apply for and get a new visa on each occasion. The outcome is that many employers will not hire international graduates for such positions" (research journal notes).

STUDENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT EMPLOYERS.

Students had a lot to say about the attitudes and behaviours of employers they had encountered when transitioning from education to employment. From the perspective of students, employers:

- 1) Lack knowledge about the work permit and hiring processes;
- 2) Are intolerant of language differences, especially accent;
- 3) Fear making a long-term commitment to international graduates who may not stay; and, on a positive note,
- 4) Value the skills and diversity found in the international student population.

Students' comments during the focus groups explain in more detail their experiences.

"I think that they [employers] value diverse backgrounds: the varied ideas, creativity and divergent ways of doing things. I think that international students are very much valued. However, the government needs to allow them to employ more of us without putting them [employers] under fear of hiring us and then we have to leave because our time is up."

"Many have some prejudice against international students fearing they might not stay in Canada for a long time."

"Most employers look for good communication skills, but most international students who don't speak English properly have a slim chance of being hired."

THEME 3. It takes more than a degree to get a job — the value of networking and an early start

Students participating in the focus groups were asked about the advice they would offer their peers who were at an earlier stage of their studies. Wide-ranging and action-oriented, this advice included:

"Pick where you live based on its requirement for you to speak English/French daily. It is too late to practice speaking with people you do not know well when you go for an interview."

"Do not give up applying for part-time work during your program of study; volunteer or seek out a co-op placement."

"Be prepared to face discrimination; always be on the look-out for better opportunity; be exceptional at work, never settle for average."

"Be prepared and ready to fulfill requirements such as good resumés as well as interviews; be ready to talk about more than your qualifications for the job; international students need to be proficient in English writing."

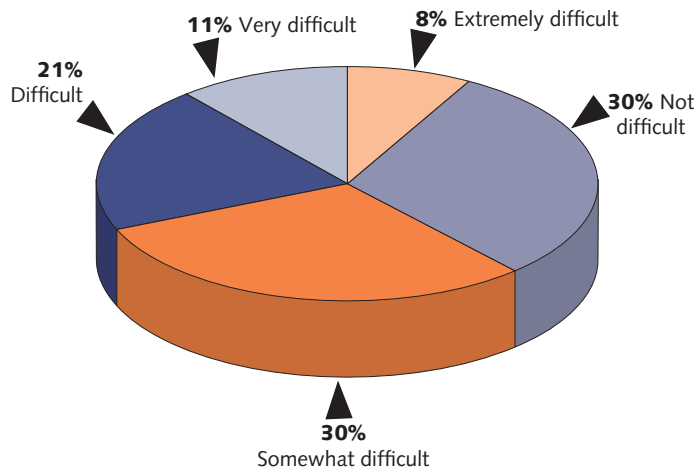
"Never give up looking for a job; never lose hope but be prepared that this is not going to be an easy task as we were told."

"If you want to stay and work in Canada you need to develop a wide range of relationships with different people and organizations in Canadian society."

“Do not wait until the last year of your program to start working on getting a job after graduation. It is a long process and if you cannot get a part-time job, volunteer. Get involved and stay connected.”

To find out just how “connected or networked” the students in the study were, the questions on the survey were re-examined in detail. It was surprising to learn that 70% of the students reported that getting involved in extra-curricular activities was, to varying degrees, difficult¹⁸ (see Table 7).

Table 7.
International Student/Graduate Involvement in Extra-Curricular Activities



In completing the survey questions, students did not explain what they found particularly difficult about being involved in extra-curricular activities. Therefore, a question about this finding was introduced into the later focus group interviews with only two possible explanations offered:

- (1) Since neither English nor French is the first language of many students, these students may need more time to study and prepare assignments, leaving no time for extra-curricular activities, and/or
- (2) Students who had not had the opportunity to live in either a French- or English-language environment were less likely to move outside of their comfort zone.

Connections, such as those that come with having deep family networks, were reported to be “natural” to Canadian students but international students had to work at it:

“Build strategies and act on them long before you graduate. If you wait, it is already too late.”

“Start early” has particular urgency when international students are faced with having no more than 90 days — from the day of their graduation — to go through the entire process of searching for a job in their field and receiving an offer, including the submission of an application for a Post-Graduation Work Permit. This time limit appears somewhat unreasonable, given that Canadian students have been found to need up to two years after graduation to find a job related to their field of study (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of Ontario, n.d.).

Several employers of large multi-national firms also discussed the “time-crunch” problem which they believe challenges the best efforts of both the employer and the international graduate.

THEME 4. Experiences of international graduates with the Canadian labour market: Lessons learned

OVERVIEW OF SECTION. Although the participation of international students surveyed in various labour market activities was low (see Table 8), students reporting having engaged in one or more form of work (Co-op and Internships associated with a student’s academic program are included) had a lot to say about their experiences and the lessons they learned. In this section, we begin with an overview of labour market experience on which students’ perceptions and experiences are grounded. The second part of this section presents the difficulties students experienced and the final part focuses on the extent to which students draw on college or university services (international student offices or the equivalent and/or career services) to help them prepare for and go through the transition to work.

Table 8 offers an overview of labour market experiences. To interpret this table, it should be kept in mind that it is possible for students to have held more than one type of work. Note that 45% of students participating in the study reported not having any labour market experience.

18. No data is available on difficulties of any student being part of extra-curricular activities on post-secondary campuses so there is no way of knowing the international student concerns are similar to or different from the norm.

Table 8.
Range of labour market experience

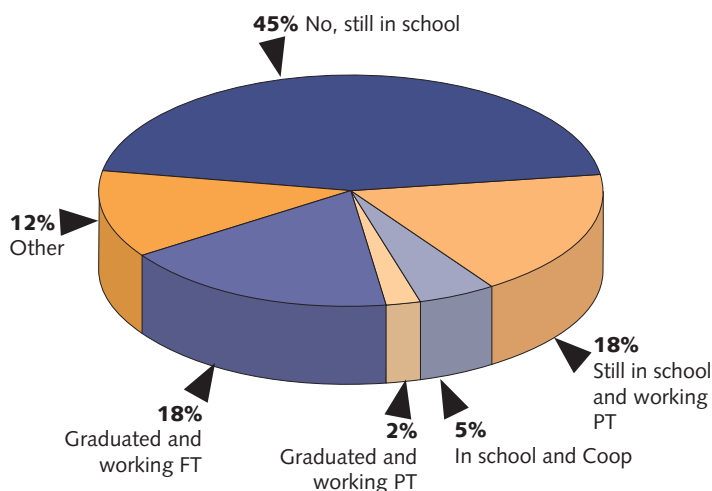
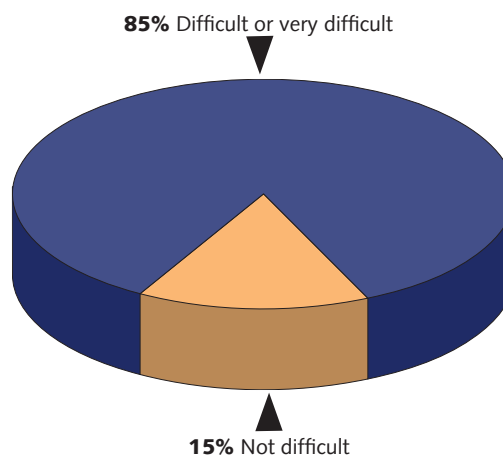


Table 9.
Post-Graduate Employment: Degrees of Difficulty



STUDENTS REPORTING SUCCESS. Students reporting some form of labour market experience were questioned further about what went well and what they found to be difficult. In response to the question about having obtained a work permit, 22% reported they were able to get one quickly and easily. Another 13% reported getting a work permit but having to wait a long time for it. Another question “Was your work during your studies related to your studies or the field in which you want to work?” Overall, and possibly because students in this category reported having more than one form of work experience, only half of the work experiences were reported to have any relationship to the students’ academic studies.

Students who spoke of their success usually focused on the fact they had developed diverse community connections and had even quite deliberately chosen a particular field of study for the opportunity it provided to have either a co-op or internship placement. Furthermore, many of the successful students talked about having a mentor, either among members of their own community who were at a later stage of their career or in the International Student Offices at their university or college. The important role played by on-campus professional staff is taken up in the next section.

STUDENTS REPORTING DIFFICULTY. Responses overwhelmingly focused on the difficulties students encountered while trying to gain employment (see Table 9).

It was important to the research to better understand with what students were having difficulty, and this was addressed in both the survey and the focus groups, the latter providing particularly compelling insights:

“... Because I have been here for awhile and I haven't been home at all in five years, I think I've given up a lot, in the sense that I've worked since I was a student, I thought at least I deserved a job as much as anybody else if I'm qualified for it, but the unknown is definitely a problem because you hear comments that actually make you feel like you don't deserve this job. You know, it's probably an extra favour that the supervisor is doing in hiring you rather than looking at the skills that you might have, and a particular person in Human Resources made some very difficult comments to me. It was not...necessary.”

This student captured the tone and thrust of the sentiments voiced by many students in this study. At the end of the focus group from which the above quote was drawn, it was clear that the students were hopeful that their participation in the study might prove helpful and that the study would not simply be lost “in a pile on someone’s desk.”

At this point, the focus shifts to those students reporting not having had any labour market experience, of whom only 34% reported having sought advice on how to prepare for or start a job search. Since earlier findings in the focus groups had demonstrated the importance of students’ preparing for work long before their final year, the survey data for non-labour market participants was re-examined, and a new question “What have you done to prepare to get a job?” was added to the focus group interview.

Some responses about preparation to get a job were reported by focus group participants to be “naïve”. Others sounded resigned, as the following quotes show:

“Given my field, I really don’t think it will take much to get my first job.”

“I am focused on getting through exams right now. After all, I really do not think there is a chance for me to get to stay in Canada anyway. I am majoring in sociology.”

“I haven’t gotten advice yet, but I intend to do so.”

Given the lack of preparation students report, it appears incumbent on the colleges and universities to examine in more detail what can be done to assist students as they prepare for this transition. The 2007 federal budget with its provision of \$34M “dedicated for the next two years to help Canadian-educated foreign students and skilled workers to stay in Canada as permanent residents” (Government of Canada, 2007) offers one important possibility for new resources that should not be overlooked (see the recommendations).

Students who participated in interviews were invited to contribute the story of their own job search. A sample appears as a sidebar to this section. Nearly all students who reported having attempted to get a job, either during or after graduation, spoke at length about failure. Fewer than 20% of the students who had sought jobs had experienced a degree of success.

A STUDENT’S STORY

I had been preparing job applications for quite some time and had received mixed responses from prospective employers. I was openly told by one company not to bother applying for a job because I was an international student. At another company, one of the world’s largest software development/consulting firms, with over 350,000 employees worldwide and \$90 billion in revenue, I made it through two rounds of interviews. Given the company’s worldwide presence and diverse workforce, I assumed my immigration status would be of little importance. I guessed wrong! At the end of the interview process, I was told that I was the best person for the job and that they wanted to hire me. However, after discussing my international student status with their lawyers, I was deemed to be too high-risk for the company to take on.

If a large firm with revenues of \$90 billion a year is afraid to hire an international student, there is clearly a problem with the perception of international students from an employer perspective. Additionally, the complexity of the process which CIC enforces, deters potential employers, big and small, from hiring international graduates.

On the flip side of the coin, I did, in the end, manage to secure employment in my field within the specified guidelines of CIC despite the long road of obstacles and let-downs. In the midst of preparing for final exams, end-of-semester assignments and juggling part-time work, the constant fear that I had only 90 days after graduation to secure employment in order to remain in Canada kept nagging at me. I was determined to build my career in Canada and so after a long day at school and work, I’d focus my energy late at night into

looking for that stepping stone into the Canadian workforce. I started looking for jobs early in my final year and was able to get an interview with TELUS, a promising and growing company. After three rounds, I was offered the job. It was November and I was to begin work in July of the following year. The company was not concerned in the least that I was an international student — they said that they wanted me for the talent I brought to the company.

For a Canadian graduate, the story would have ended here — but for international students, this is only the first step to entering the Canadian labour market from an immigration perspective. To my disadvantage, applying for the post-grad work permit is only possible once you’ve secured a job AND you have graduated. I had secured a job about five months in advance of graduation and, frustratingly, I could not submit my work permit application and start the processing to reduce the wait-time after graduation. I had to wait until the university systems were updated to reflect the completion of my degree. I then compiled my extensive application within one day (only because I had been prepared a week in advance). Thirty-eight days later, with no word from CIC about whether my application was sufficient or lacking anything, I received my work permit – with only a few days to spare before starting my job. I was relieved and a huge amount of anxiety had been lifted.

In the end, I was fortunate that TELUS was flexible enough to understand the permit guidelines and requirements and that allowed me to start my job nearly two months after the expected start date – long after graduation – not a luxury that most employers allow.

SECTION FIVE

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OFFICES

The role of the International Student Office (ISO), or its equivalent on campus, is to provide a range of personal and other support to students during studies and preparing for the transition following the completion of a program. In some instances these offices also coordinate exchange programs for students during their studies. One example of the way in which these offices present themselves to students follows:

“The college offers many services for international students. We can help students with Study Permits, Canada’s immigration regulations and policies, medical insurance, orientation, homestay, living in the [city] and much more. Students are encouraged to meet the staff at the International Student Centre — we are here to help!”

Key professionals within the ISO are the International Student Advisers (ISAs) who provide direct services such as advising, counseling, referrals, assistance with forms and other documentation. For this study, ISAs distributed the research announcement to students, made local arrangements for focus group interviews, and met with the research team to discuss the activities of the ISO. At this time, each office also prepared a collection of their programs which were then used to identify a range of “good practices” that are introduced below. Notes and observations were maintained in the research journal throughout the campus visit. The next paragraph is an excerpt from the journal.

“Regardless of the number of trained personnel and the resources made available to support its activities, international student offices exist on every campus in the study. As professionals, this is a group that is exclusively focused on the well-being of international students. Given the role this office is expected to play, not only with international students but recently with the internationalization efforts of the institution, it was surprising to find the work load is carried by very few people. With rare exception, where private funding might be accessible at times, meaning the programs and activities offered do not have to rely solely on institutional funding, most such offices consist of two, maybe three, people.

And, with rare exception where private funding might be accessible, the programs and activities offered are severely restricted by the low level of institutional investment. It appeared that the institutions are, for the most part, relying on the professionalism of the staff to carry out their mandate, overlooking the realities of running an office/centre on a daily basis, all of which require more than human resources” (Research Journal, 2007).

It is to the ISO that students look for help, academically and about employment. Most ISAs reported being in regular contact with the staff of the Career Services Office which organizes Job Fairs for all students on campus. At times these two offices share information and work collaboratively. For the most part, however, it is the staff of the ISO who carry the responsibility for institutional support.

The ISOs offer a wide range of services which are recognized by the students in this study as being their only contact with the post-secondary institution outside of their academic departments. Programs targeted to students in their last year of study were limited but instances of “Good Practice” include the following:

- (1) Sample letters are provided for students to give to potential employers, concerning work permits and job offers, to assist those who are resistant or hesitate to write such letters without more information (see Appendices).
- (2) A Mentoring Program is offered which links international students with members of the business and professional communities who themselves have gone through the transition from education to employment. Offering students unique opportunities to work with these professionals, the program opens possibilities for not only helping individual students but possibilities for building better linkages between institutions-students-employers.
- (3) A CD is available containing comprehensive information and advice on preparing for and getting a job in Canada, designed specifically for international students.

Not all institutions are able to offer these services and this appears due not to a lack of will and expertise but rather to a shortage of staff and resources.

In fact, review of the data collected on campus strongly suggests that ISOs are currently working well “over

capacity”, relying heavily on the professional commitment of the staff to go above and beyond in order to meet the needs of international students. A full-scale review of service requirements and current resourcing in this area is certainly due.

SECTION SIX

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study marks a significant departure from previous research into the policies governing the admission and subsequent administration of international students in Canada, in that it has “gone to the front lines” and asked foreign students directly about the practical reality of living in Canada on a study permit. The results are astonishing.

Despite recent changes to allow international students to work during and after their studies, members of this group still find themselves at a serious disadvantage with respect to not only

securing post-graduate work, but also getting the required documentation in order to actually be allowed to pursue employment. Further, they find their allowed employment timeframe too brief to make them attractive to prospective employers. With respect to staying permanently in this country, the process these foreign nationals, newly educated in Canada, are subjected to is fraught with a dizzying array of administrative hurdles, despite recent ministerial statements which seem to welcome them and suggest that these challenges have been minimized or removed.

SECTION SEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was not only to understand the degree to which Canada is currently benefitting from international graduates in fulfilling labour force imperatives, but to recommend policy measures to enhance Canada's capacity to attract and retain individuals from this highly trained talent pool. This section contains recommendations which involve not only the federal government, but include actions recommended for employers, international students, and post-secondary institutions.

1. The government of Canada should look critically at the model currently in place in Australia (Australia Education International), and consider committing resources to a similar special unit within either Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) or Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). This unit's mandate should be the development, coordination, and administration of all matters of education and immigration policy affecting international students.

In addition, this unit should liaise and coordinate with other stakeholder federal government departments, in particular Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT), as well as with members of the "critical partnership" which includes the provinces and territories, educational institutions, NGOs and other volunteer and service organizations to develop policies, procedures and regulations that pertain to the admission, assessment and maintenance of international students.

Furthermore, the government of Canada should look at committing new resources to establishing a research and development program within this unit, with a view to stimulating future and ongoing research on international education issues — which includes international students and graduates — in Canada. Such research would make a strong contribution to emerging policy issues in this area.

Lastly, funds should be made available to support a range of employer workshops that need to be regularly offered in varied locations; collaboration between the unit, CIC, CBIE and the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) would be particularly useful.

2. The government of Canada should carefully examine the rationale behind its policies and regulations regarding international students and, except in instances relating to security, move to eliminate unnecessary restrictions. Once international students are given the green light to proceed to Canada, measures which discourage rather than support their participation in the Canadian labour force should be modified, especially the following:

- Removal of the field of study requirement for Post-Graduation Work Permits. This requirement currently disadvantages students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences where skills lead to a range of employment not always clearly related to their academic work. Indirectly, the current requirement disadvantages women, who are more likely to graduate from programs other than sciences and engineering.
- Provision of an open one-year work permit (with option for extension) allowing new graduates to seek employment with a work permit in hand — rather than a potential wait of several weeks or even months. CIC has been exploring this measure; its implementation should be expedited.
- Removal of the labour market opinion (LMO) requirement. While it seems to be the government's intention to remove this impediment for employers wishing to retain an international graduate following the post-graduation employment year (or two years), it is not clear. Employers need to be made fully aware that LMO is not required for international student off-campus and post-graduate work permits under the CIC programs. In the event that an employer wishes to keep an international graduate beyond the two years permitted under the Post-Graduation Work Program, he or she should be aware that LMO should not be an issue, as it is either not required or will not be in the very near future. The government needs to ensure that the transition to permanent employment and permanent residency is seamless.
- Extension of the Post-Graduation Work Permit to at least two years for international graduates

in all cities. The exclusion of the three largest cities, Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver, is disadvantageous to students and to the many employers based in these centres — and ultimately, to the nation.

- In the Federal Skilled Worker Application, removal of the requirement for prior work experience for international students who have graduated from a Canadian post-secondary program.
3. The government of Canada should develop a comprehensive communications strategy using well-established networks among its “critical partners,” such as CBIE and CACEE, to ensure adequate, accurate and timely communication of its policies to international students, educational institutions, employers and other stakeholders.
 4. The government of Canada, together with the provinces and territories, should (without making educational institutions “police” students) look closely at the U.S. model with an aim to empowering educational institutions to certify that prospective foreign students satisfy the requirements for admission to Canada (e.g. information on U.S. visas and the I-20 and DS 2019 forms)¹⁹.
 5. The government of Canada should expand support for the Provincial Nominee Program and other provincial and territorial initiatives that provide opportunities for international graduates to work. The current limits on the number of employment opportunities are unrealistic for a country that understands the importance of international graduates to strengthening the labour market.
 6. International students should commit themselves to preparing for transition to the Canadian labour market

beginning early in their programs of study. To that end, post-secondary institutions should, working with faculties, schools and other academic units, ISOs and CIC, require a course (or series of workshops) be completed prior to graduation that prepare(s) international students for the transition from school to employment.

7. Post-secondary institutions should seek funding from the government of Canada to increase staffing and strengthen services, programs and activities targeted to international students.
8. Employers should demand regional workshops such that they are kept up-to-date on changes in policy and better able to contribute to and benefit from the government's programs focused on international graduates.

The leadership required to correct the present dilemma, as presented in this study, is nothing short of strategic action. The absence of a national strategy for international education (e.g. AUCC, 2004; Farquhar, 2001; Peykov, 2004) — which includes international students and their transition into the labour market — is seriously damaging. The federal government, together with its critical partners, needs to map out a clear strategy designed to: (1) Attract many more stellar international students to Canada; and (2) Implement policies and procedures that are flexible enough to allow those international students who wish to work and remain permanently in Canada to do so easily.

Given the increased mobility of the global labour pool and the actions of competitor nations to capitalize on this growing phenomenon, coupled with our national demographic reality, it is inconceivable that Canada should accept the status quo. The international students who contributed their thoughts and energy to this study call upon us to act — now.

19. For more information on these forms, visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html

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APPENDIX 1. WEB-BASED SURVEY (English)

International Graduates and the Canadian Labour Market: A Survey of International Students in their Final Year of Study and a Year after Graduation

I. About You

1. In which country or countries are you a citizen or permanent resident:

2. In which country were you born?

3 Are you?

Male

Female

4. Age Group: 18-23 24 -30 31-40 50+

5. How long have you lived/studied in Canada? Year(s) _____ Month(s) _____

6. How old were you when you first came to Canada to study? _____ (Years)

7. Immigration Status: (Check all that apply)

At Original Entry

Present Status

_____ Canadian Citizen

_____ Permanent Resident

_____ Student Visa

_____ Protected Person/Refugee

_____ Visitor's Visa

8. If you are not a Canadian Citizen or a Permanent Resident do you intend to become a Permanent Resident or Citizen of Canada within the next few years?

Yes

No

Don't Know

I am already a Permanent Resident or Canadian Citizen

9. What language(s) are you comfortable speaking and reading?

10. From where did the resources come to support your study abroad? (Check all that apply)

Family

Loan

Home Government Grant

Funding from a Canadian Organization

NGO Funds

Canadian Government Grant

Other, please specify _____

11. In which type of degree/certificate program are you registered or graduated?

Certificate/Diploma

BA/BSc/BSc Honours

Master's Degree

Ph.D/ Ed.D.

12. In what field/program of study are you registered or from which you have graduated? (For example: Geography, Nursing, Business, Psychology)

II. Educational Participation / Graduation

13. Why did you leave your home to study abroad? Please describe in your own words.

14. Why did you choose to study in Canada? Please describe in your words.

15. In what year did or do you expect to graduate? _____(Year)

16. If you have already graduated, are you currently working?

- I am still in school
- No, I have graduated but am not working
- Yes, I have graduated and am working full-time.
- Yes, I have graduated and am working part-time

If yes, describe the type of work you are doing: _____

If No, describe what you have done to get a job: _____

17. At which type of educational institution did you or are you studying?

Check all that apply: College University University-College Institute

Other? Please specify _____

18. Province(s) in which you are or did study? _____

19. Please rate the degree of difficulty have you faced in the following aspects of the educational study in Canada.

Please use a scale (1 to 5) where 1 is not at all difficult and 5 is extremely difficult,

1 Not at all difficult 2 somewhat difficult 3 difficult 4 very difficult 5 extremely difficult

a. Finding out program information prior to entry	1	2	3	4	5
b. Getting good information on admissions criteria	1	2	3	4	5
c. Adapting to new teaching/learning styles	1	2	3	4	5
d. Getting involved in extra curricular activities	1	2	3	4	5
e. Dealing with teamwork in classes	1	2	3	4	5

In answering the following questions (f, g, h, & i), please circle which of the two official languages of Canada was used as the language of instruction in your studies and then indicate level of difficulty experienced, if any.

Example: English/French	1	2	3	4	5
f. Understanding Spoken English /French	1	2	3	4	5
g. Speaking English/French	1	2	3	4	5
h. Reading English/French	1	2	3	4	5
i. Writing English/French	1	2	3	4	5

20. Please respond to the following statements relating to your *social and friendship patterns* while registered in a post-secondary institution.

Use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Not at all difficult and 5 is extremely difficult,

1 Not at all difficult 2 somewhat difficult 3 difficult 4. very difficult 5 extremely difficult

a. I am/was able to make friends in school	1	2	3	4	5
b. I am/was able to find genuinely close/good friends in at school	1	2	3	4	5
c. I met Canadians whom I consider to be my close friends at school	1	2	3	4	5
d. I participate(d) in social activities with Canadians while in school	1	2	3	4	5
e. I wish I knew more Canadian students at school	1	2	3	4	5
f. I engaged in social activities with both other international students as well as Canadian students?	1	2	3	4	5

21. Please indicate if you have witnessed or personally experienced prejudice perpetuated by members of other international students or Canadian students in the following areas:

	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race or Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Country of Origin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have experienced prejudice do you believe this experience is likely to cause you to decide not to stay in Canada following graduation?

Not applicable

Yes

No

Don't Know

Comments _____

III. Preparing to Work

22. Have you obtained a Social Insurance Number (SIN)?

Yes – I was able to get one quickly and easily

Yes – but it took a long time to get one

No – I tried to get one, but was not able to

No – I have not tried to get a Social Insurance number

Don't know or not applicable

23 Have you obtained a work permit?

Yes – I was able to get one quickly and easily

Yes – but it took a long time to get one

No – I tried to get one, but was not able to

No – I have not tried to get a work permit

24. Have you received advice on how to prepare and search for a job during or after graduation?

Yes.

If yes, which office/service/department provided this assistance? _____

No

If no, do you intend to get advice on how to search for a job before graduation? Yes No

From whom do you think you will go to get this advice? (e.g. office or service)

25. Do you think it has been or will be difficult for you, as an international student/graduate, to find full-time work after graduation?

No. If no, proceed to #26.

Maybe

Yes

If yes or maybe, what are the reasons you have or may find it difficult to find work as an international student?

IV. Employment During Your Program of Study

26. Have you worked on-campus (for pay) during your studies?

No. If no, proceed to question 27.

Yes

If yes, has your employment been related to your program of study or future career plans?

Yes

No

27. Have you worked off-campus (for pay) during your studies?

No, go directly to question 29.

Yes

If yes, was your off-campus work related to your undergraduate/graduate studies?

Yes

No

28. Did you participate in a co-op placement or internship while attending college/university?

No

Yes

If yes, did this placement lead or help lead to a job following graduation or during the summer(s)?

Yes

No

V. Post-Graduation Employment / Plans for Employment

29. What best describes your post-graduate plans? Check all that apply.

Return to country of origin for work

Return to country of origin for further education

Go to a third country for further education

Go to a third country for work

Pursue further training or study in Canada

Remain in Canada to Canada

If you checked more than one option to this question, please indicate your 2 most important choices. (1)

_____ (2) _____

30. If you plan to return to your home country, what would be the major factors influencing this decision?

Don't plan return home to study or work within 5 years of graduation.

I will/might return. Please describe why you might return home and the factors influencing this decision.

31. If you plan to leave Canada for whatever reason after graduation what, if anything, would the Canadian Government have to do to get you to change your mind and remain in Canada to work?

Nothing I know of would make me change my mind

It would make a difference to me if the Canadian Government would: (Please describe in your own words)

32. What is your perception of how Canadian employers view the employability of international students/graduates?

33. In your opinion, should Canadian employers be doing more to encourage and employ international students/graduates?

No, proceed to #34

Yes

If yes, what might be done that would improve the likelihood you would remain in Canada and take up full-time employment?

34. If you were offered a very good job in Canada and in the United States, in which country would you choose to work and what factors would influence this decision? (Check one country and then give your reasons).

Canada: What factors would influence your choice to work in Canada?

United States: What factors would influence your choice to work in the U.S.?

35. If you had a choice of working anywhere in the world in which country would you choose to work and why? _____

36. If you have already graduated from a Canadian post-secondary program, what has been your experience in locating and getting a full-time job?

Not Applicable, I haven't yet graduated.

This applies to me. Please describe your experience.

37. If you have already graduated from a Canadian post-secondary program, what has been your experience in getting a full-time job **in your field of study**?

Not Applicable, my reply is the same as it was in #36 above. Proceed to #39.

This applies to me. Please describe in your own words.

38. In looking for a good job, would you be willing to move to a different province?

No

Yes

If yes, which province in Canada is most attractive to you for living and working?

39. How important is it to you that your spouse/partner get work in order to for you to decide to stay in Canada rather than going back to your country of origin?

Not Applicable

Applicable and (check one)

Very Important

Somewhat Important

Important

Not Very Important

Not at all Important

40. Describe the ideal job for you upon completion of your studies.

IF YOU ARE STILL A STUDENT **STOP** HERE AND PRESS THE SUBMIT TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.
THANK YOU.

SUBMIT

IF YOU HAVE GRADUATED FROM A PSE PROGRAM **PLEASE CONTINUE TO SECTION VI**

VI. For Graduates Only

41. What is your current status in the Canadian labour market?

- Have a full-time job
- Have a part-time job
- Am not currently working
- Am looking for a job
- Registered in another undergraduate or graduate program of study
- Am ready to return home.

42. If you are working, in which sector are you employed?

- Not Working _____
- Sector in which employed: _____

43. Did you have to move out of the town/city in which you were living while going to school to move to another location in order to get a job? No ___ Yes _____

44. How satisfied are you with your job at this stage of your career ?

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not satisfied at all

45. How difficult was it to get a full-time job in your field? _____

46. What are the best things about working in Canada?

47. If you were to give advice to international students getting ready to find their first full-time job in Canada, what would your advice be?

48. What is/was the source(s) of the greatest frustration you experienced in looking for a job after graduation?

49. If you were asked by your college/university for advice as to how to better help international students prepare for entry into the Canadian labour market, what would that advice to the school include?

50. Please use your own words to tell us about any issue or experience that you think would help us understand your experience(s) in Canada, especially those that are related to entering the Canadian labour market.

TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY, PLEASE PRESS THE **SUBMIT** BUTTON BELOW. THANK YOU

SUBMIT

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APPENDIX 2. FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL*

Part One: Introductions

1. Hello, and welcome to our focus group.
2. I'm Sheryl Bond, an Associate Professor at Queen's University and moderator today.
3. The purpose of this focus group is (explain).
4. Participant role explained:

We invited you here to listen to your thoughts, ideas and experiences with studying and working in Canada. I want to assure you there are no wrong answers.

To help us feel comfortable with each other, I suggest we address each other on the basis of our first names, which are already on the name cards in front of you.

I would suggest that just one person should speak at a time but please feel free to discuss the questions among yourselves and not just direct your contributions any one person.

5. Moderator role explained:

Each of you has read the letter of information and signed the letter of consent. Do any of you have questions about the focus group process or the research? If you would like to receive a summary of our findings, please make sure you gave us your contact address at the bottom of the consent form.

My role as moderator is to introduce around 10 questions, some introductory and some more central to our research.

If any person is taking up all the time, I will suggest to him/her that time is to be shared with others. I am using a tape recorder today so as not to lose or forget any one's contribution.

As announced in the invitation to participate, this focus group will last only 90 minutes and I will stop the group at that time.

Let's begin ...

Part 2. Opening Question

1. Please introduce yourself and indicate what year you are in your program; tell us about your field of study and a favorite hobby.

* The same protocol was followed in the individual interviews.

Part 3: Let's now go into our more specific questions.

1. Why did you choose to study in Canada?
2. What are your plans after graduation?

Prompt if more discussion is needed:

- (a) Why go back home?
 - (b) Why stay?
 - (c) Other plans
3. Describe the job in Canada/U.S./other countries that you hope to get after graduation. If you could choose where to work, where would that be?

Prompt if more discussion is needed:

- (a). How directly is it related to your field?
 - (b). How easy do you think it will be to get a job?
4. If you could work anywhere in the world in your ideal job, where would you work and why?
 5. Have you worked in a Canadian context? Tell us a little about that experience.

Prompt, if needed: (a) volunteering

6. What challenges do International students face when trying to enter Canadian labour market?
7. What factors do/did you take into account in deciding to stay in Canada?
Prompt: (a) Offer examples from previous focus groups only if necessary
8. If you had one minute with the Prime Minister, what would you say to him that would help you or other international students/graduates to get a full-time job in Canada?
9. What could employers do help International Graduates get jobs in Canada?
10. What have we not talked about that we should?

THANK YOU

APPENDIX 3. EMPLOYER SURVEY

Questions:

1. What has been your experience with hiring international graduates?
2. What could international graduates do to increase their chances of getting a job with your company/organization?
3. What is required of the employer who wants to hire an international graduate?
4. How difficult is it to hire an international graduate? Is it sufficient to deter your organization/company from hiring?
5. What do international graduates have to offer your company/organization?
6. What advice would you offer to those employers who are resistant or hesitant to hire international graduates?

APPENDIX 4. GOOD PRACTICES*

SAMPLE OF LETTER FOR EMPLOYER TO USE WHEN MAKING AN INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE A JOB OFFER

This letter should be on company letterhead. The job offer letter is for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and should include: (1) the job title and duties, (2) the salary, and (3) the starting date.

April 17, 2007

Ms. Jane Jones

1234 Lonsdale St.

North Vancouver, B.C. V9K 2E0

Dear Ms. Jones,

We are pleased to offer you the position of (***insert job title***) with XYZ Company. This position is responsible for _____, _____, _____, and _____. (***In this section include as many details as possible to make it easy for someone to understand the job. Include details, for example, 'marketing', 'coordinating', 'consulting', 'interviewing', 'translating', 'training', and so on.***)

The salary for this job is _____. (***This could be wage per hour, month, year.***)

The job will begin June 1, 2007, or as soon as you receive your Work Permit.

We look forward to you starting your job at XYZ Company.

If you have questions or need further information please feel free to contact me at telephone _____ or e-mail _____.

Yours truly,

MR/MS. X

Manager, XYZ Company

* This letter was contributed by a college/university participating in the study

APPENDIX 5. GOOD PRACTICES*

SAMPLE LETTER FROM INSTITUTION FOR STUDENT APPLYING FOR EMPLOYMENT (SENSITIZATION OF EMPLOYER)

(Date)

(Student's name)

(Program of study)

Dear (Employer's Name),

International students studying in Canada, who earn a major credential, are entitled to a Post-Graduate Work Permit of one year as long as the work is related to their program of study. **(Name of student)** is eligible to apply for a Work Permit because s/he has completed her/his **(degree/diploma)**.

In order to apply for the Work Permit the student requires a letter from the employer describing **(1) the job and duties, (2) the salary, and (3) the starting date**. Once the student applies with this letter it is a matter of a few weeks before the Work Permit is issued. In some cases students may have an Off-Campus Work Permit, which already allows them to work.

I am very supportive of this program because it is mutually beneficial, allowing employers to use the skills of new and highly motivated graduates while at the same time allowing the students to gain some work experience.

For further information please feel free to call me.

Yours truly,

Manager X

* This letter was contributed by a college/university participating in the study

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Shaljan Areepattamannil is a PhD student in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. Being a recent landed immigrant in Canada, much of his research focuses on the cultural psychology of immigrants in North America. His recent works have been published in journals including the *Canadian Journal of Education* and the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*.

Sheryl Bond is the Principal Investigator for the study and an Associate Professor of Cultural and Policy Studies in Higher Education at Queen's University. In addition to holding senior administrative positions, she was the founding director of the Centre for Higher Education Research and Development at the University of Manitoba and worked with UNESCO's program, women and management in the Commonwealth, for over 15 years. Her research has focused on academic leadership, the health of women leaders, the internationalization of post-secondary curriculum, and the contributions of international students to the internationalization of the Canadian university. For further information about the study, Sheryl can be contacted at slb2@post.queensu.ca.

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Elaine Hayle is a final year M.Ed. candidate in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. She has worked as an economist at the Bank of Jamaica for 11 years. She has extensive experience in policy issues, including balance of payments compilation and analysis, monetary policy and international economic development. She has also worked as a teacher for a number of years in the education system in Jamaica.

Majid Malekan is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. His research focus is cultural aspects of science education, equity and accessibility in science education, and popularization/democratization of science. He has worked for more than two decades as a teacher, educator, program developer, translator, editor and social activist in Iran and Canada.

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