BCCIE – A Guide to Comprehensive International Student Support

From Pre-arrival to Post-Graduation

‘A Roadmap’

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Introduction

We are pleased to present the BCCIE – *A Guide to Comprehensive International Student Support*. This project encompassed three key components: an environmental scan, a student life cycle resource, and a 1-3 year work plan for the British Columbia Council for International Education (BCCIE) focusing on international student supports provided by post-secondary institutions.

The environmental scan involved research and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including the BCCIE, to compile a comprehensive list of international student support resources. This scan encompassed the public/private post-secondary sector in British Columbia, Canada, as well as competitor jurisdictions. Additionally, consultations were held with sector colleagues to gather valuable insights that complemented the research. The results from the scan were incorporated into the student life cycle resource and served as a starting point to better understand the international student support landscape in BC, while highlighting the excellent work of colleagues and institutions throughout the sector that continue to innovate to create unique supports for the needs of international students. It is important to note that the examples provided from other institutions are part of an ever-changing International Education (IE) landscape. Since 2020, the education sector has witnessed significant shifts and changes, particularly in response to the global pandemic, geopolitical shifts and government policy adjustments. These circumstances have necessitated the implementation of various stop-gap approaches to programming and support, as well as adapting to new expectations from students.

As noted by El Masri & Khan (2022) the support services aimed at international students often fail to consider the diverse nature of their lives. While this categorization serves administrative purposes, it does not adequately meet the needs of the wide-ranging international student body. Additionally, institutions mainly concentrate on supporting students during their initial enrolment phase, often lacking specific services for upper-year students and post-graduates, such as career guidance and immigration assistance. Although educational institutions provide numerous support services for international students, these resources are sometimes underutilized in favour of more informal sources of assistance, such as friends, family, community organizations, and online platforms. This preference can be attributed to a lack of awareness about available support, perceived discrimination, and a sense of cultural disconnect. However, international students tend to take advantage of specific services like language training, academic support, and financial guidance, as they prove beneficial in navigating cultural and educational challenges while alleviating financial pressures. Some international students also experience feelings of racial stereotyping and being perceived as different due to their cultural background. Linguistic and cultural disparities are viewed as barriers to forming friendships with Canadians, although international students express a desire to establish connections with individuals from Canada.

Utilizing the findings from the environmental scan, research and expertise in the field, a 'Roadmap' of effective practices document was created. It is important to note that as a premise for this work, international students never have been, nor will ever be a homogenous group, they have diverse needs and nuances based on a variety of factors. Additionally, the tendency from a programmatic standpoint has often been from a deficit lens when talking about international students, and the authors wish to highlight the importance of taking a critical approach to the discussion, with a strengths, assets and equity lens. This resource provides institutions with a practical checklist and guidance on supporting international students throughout their entire student life cycle. These ideas are meant as starting

points to provide ideas along the way and are not exhaustive. Spanning from their first point of contact with an institution to their journey after graduation, this resource addresses various areas of importance, including whole student growth and development, student support, well-being and access, active inclusion and belonging, collaborative relationships and partnerships, staff training requirements and engagement, program quality, assessment, and integrity. Meeting the support needs of international students is crucial for recruiting and retaining them. As highlighted by Karuppan and Barari (2010), one of the most effective strategies for ensuring a constant flow of international students is to prioritize meeting the needs of those who are already enrolled. In creating responsive and innovative supports, institutions can create an inclusive and supportive environment that attracts and maintains a diverse student body, enhancing their academic success and overall well-being.

Additionally, the 1–3-year workplan for BCCIE was developed to ensure the dissemination of critical information on international student supports. This plan outlines strategies to effectively communicate and share information through multiple channels, such as the StudyinBC website (student-facing) and the BCCIE website. It also encompasses ongoing capacity-building activities and highlights specific opportunities to support regional institutions in enhancing their international student support systems within their respective communities, specifically outside of the metro Vancouver region. The workplan was not included in the this 'Roadmap' document.

We emphasize that this project, while completed, represents a foundational milestone. It is meant to be a living document, with continuous iterations and improvements based on emerging research, evolving industry standards, and feedback from colleagues across British Columbia. Future iterations will showcase the work and insights contributed by our valued colleagues, further enhancing international student supports and strengthening the post-secondary sector in British Columbia.

We extend our gratitude to all the stakeholders and collaborators who have contributed to the successful completion of this project. Together, we look forward to fostering whole student growth and development, facilitating student support and well-being, promoting active inclusion and belonging, establishing collaborative relationships and partnerships, supporting staff training and engagement, ensuring program quality, assessment, and integrity of international education in British Columbia.

Context[1]

The last two decades have seen a growing emphasis on internationalization activities in higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide. In Canada, international student enrolments have become a key aspect of this trend creating a symbiotic relationship including the students, HEIs, and the Canadian government. From an institutional perspective, attracting international students can enhance recruitment efforts and generate revenue. For students, studying in Canada offers opportunities for immigration and improved employability. The government, in turn, aims to retain international graduates as skilled immigrants. Comprehensive supports and career programming for international

[1] Please note that these summaries and overviews were completed before January 22, 2024 and are intended to provide historical context and summary of the Canadian international education (IE) experience, given the rapidly shifting landscape, this will need to be continually revisited in the coming months and years.

students play a crucial role in their decision to stay in Canada long-term, as well as in shaping the reputation of HEIs. Understanding these supports is essential for practitioners, administrators, and students, given the evolving landscape of international education.

Over the past two decades the connection between international education and economic concerns have become strongly linked in the Canadian context. Canada's initial international education strategy, released during the Conservative government's time, praised international students for not only providing immediate and significant economic benefits to Canadians in all regions of the country, but also for being a potential source of skilled labor, well-positioned to immigrate to Canada. Despite political differences, the Liberal government's approach to internationalization largely reinforced that of its predecessor, namely international students as excellent candidates for permanent residency, highlighting their significant economic contributions that have a far-reaching impact across the nation, combined with the narrative of Canada's need to compete globally for this important source of revenue and human capital. Similar immigration approaches are also being adopted by other countries, including the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Integrating international graduates into the Canadian workforce is a potential area for further economic benefits.

Increasing international enrolments present both motivations and challenges for HEIs in Canada. Governments and institutional leaders work together to promote the recruitment of international students for economic and immigration purposes. This requires institutions to address the unique needs of their diverse student body, including providing adequate supports and programming. Despite the growth in international enrolments, supports for international students have not kept pace. In enrolment management equal attention needs to be paid to recruiting students to the engagement and retention of students. There is tremendous cost if students are successfully recruited for an institution but then lost through attrition. It is estimated that it is 3 – 5 times more costly to recruit a student than it is to retain one (Cuseo, 2010, Siedman, 2012). Institutions must strive to provide supports throughout the student experience, including orientation activities, academic assistance, and mental health services. The nature of academic migration and the desire to retain international students also influence the types of services provided, such as career counseling and immigration advising. However, the level of programming and support varies among institutions and may not sufficiently address the employability concerns of international students later in their academic journey. Additionally, keeping up with immigration policy changes and limitations on immigration advice provision remains a challenge for HEIs.

Overall, comprehensive supports for international students are of utmost importance in the context of increasing internationalization in Canadian HEIs. These supports not only influence the decision of international students to stay in Canada but also contribute to the reputation and economic impact of institutions. Understanding and improving programming and outcomes for international students is essential for practitioners, administrators, and students as international education continues to evolve.

Literature Review

Internationalization activities at HEIs around the world have become increasingly important over the last two decades. Internationalization has many dimensions: international partnerships, research funding, rankings, and academic exchange programs. For many countries, including Canada, one of the key aspects has been increasing international student enrolments. “International students, HEIs and the Canadian government are part of a symbiotic relationship with each group having their own desired outcomes” (Arthur & Flynn, 2011, pp. 232-233). From an institutional perspective, the prospect of

migration to Canada can be used as a marketing advantage to recruit additional fee-paying students. From a student perspective, many wish to immigrate to Canada and are focused on employability post-graduation. Finally, from a governmental perspective, there has been a clear focus on retaining international graduates as skilled immigrants (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). The programs and activities of HEIs related to career preparation of international students may have an impact in students' decision or ability to stay in Canada long-term, as well as influence the HEIs' reputation.

International education in Canada

In the Canadian context, more than 95% of universities report their strategic or long-term planning documents make or will make explicit reference to internationalization and/or global engagement (AUCC, 2014). Of the responding institutions 82% report that internationalization was one of the top priorities, indicating that internationalization strategies are an important aspect of Canadian HEIs strategic plans (AUCC, 2014).

The emphasis from governmental policy makers on recruiting international students is not just about the initial economic impact that students have, but also the retention of international students as skilled workers as part of an overall immigration strategy (Hawthorne, 2010; IRCC, 2018c; Kunin, 2017; She & Wotherspoon, 2013). The Canadian government, since 2008, has implemented several policy changes to make studying in Canada more attractive for international students. One example is the creation of the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), which allows international students who have graduated with a qualification from a Canadian designated learning institution (DLI) to work in Canada for up to three years after graduation. The PGWP allows students to gain work experience to make them eligible for immigration through various pathways, such as the Canadian Experience Class (CEC).

Economic impact

Economic and job creation benefits are one of the major focuses in the initial version of Canada's International Education Strategy (CIES), released in 2014. In 2012, with around 265,000 international students in Canada, the economic impact of international education was an estimated 8.4 billion dollars and helped create 86,000 jobs across Canada (Government of Canada, 2014). By 2017, $18.4 billion was put into the Canadian economy by international student expenditures across the country. The comparable number in 2018 was $22.3 billion. This represents a 21.2% increase in international student spending between 2017 and 2018, (Government of Canada, 2020), highlighting the broad impact on the economies of many regions in Canada. The CIES also articulated the desire to recruit international students to stay in Canada long-term as skilled immigrants to make up for the identified skilled labour shortage that is of concern for Canada and many Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Numerous immigration pathways geared towards recruiting and retaining international students are promoted at the federal and provincial levels (Desai-Trilokekar & El Masri, 2016; Seidle, 2013; She & Wotherspoon, 2013). Since 2015, both Ministers of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) made it clear that international students form an important part of the government's immigration strategy (Donovan, 2016; IRCC, 2017; IRCC, 2018c). Canada is not alone in this regard. The study and stay immigration approach is being utilized in other countries as well, including countries that are viewed as competitors in recruiting international students such as Australia and New Zealand (Civinini, 2018c, 2018d). The prominence of the economic impact of international education in Canada is a significant contributor to the economic landscape of many regions across

Canada. Yet the potential for increased benefits through the effective integration of international graduates into the Canadian workforce as skilled immigrants is an area that is still to be fully realized.

In August 2019, a new international education strategy was released by the federal governments entitled, "Building on Success: Canada's International Education Strategy (2019-2024)"**.** The new strategy has three key objectives:

- Encourage Canadian students to gain new skills through study and work abroad opportunities in key global markets, especially Asia;
- Diversify the countries from which international students come to Canada, as well as their fields, levels of study, and location of study within Canada; and
- Increase support for Canadian education sector institutions to help grow their export services and explore new opportunities abroad.
  (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 1).

In terms of economic impact to the Canadian economy, in 2018, international students in Canada spent an estimated $21.6 billion on tuition, accommodation and other expenses in 2018 (Government of Canada, 2019). As noted in the second paragraph of the plan:

> The new International Education Strategy builds on the attributes that make Canada a powerhouse in international education: strong schools and programs of study in both English and French; peaceful, welcoming and diverse communities; an enviable quality of life; opportunities to work and start careers; and pathways to permanent residency. (Government of Canada, 2019)

As noted in the excerpt above, the current plan highlights some of the key aspects that have already contributed to Canada's success on the global stage as an educational powerhouse including the potential for international students to work and start their careers, as well as highlighting the pathways to permanent residency. The retention of international students is noted in the plan, in the section focused on inbound mobility. Additionally, it highlights some of the successes of international students who have contributed to the economic development and innovation in Canada (Government of Canada, 2019). As a result of both iterations (2014 and 2019) of the CIES, and the focus on retaining international graduates in Canada, the professional skills, networking, and knowledge of the immigration processes may become a central focus for HEIs that concentrate on recruiting and effectively preparing future alumni in their transition to the workforce.

Another interesting development with the CIES (2019) is it now includes three different departments across the federal government, with various goals outlined in each of the areas of jurisdiction. Global Affairs Canada; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada are all involved in the plan, whereas the previous plan was based out of the former department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. The distribution of various aspects of this plan into three departments highlights the importance of international education to Canada and the multiple dimensions that are involved with this iteration of the plan.

While the previous CIES (2014) was more focused on the expansion of the numbers of international students, with ambitious goals noted for 2024, CIES (2019) has a broader scope in terms of the various dimensions of international education for Canadian students. Specifically, with its focus on study abroad

opportunities and funding opportunities, the intent of the new plan is to increase global connections and the global competencies for Canadian students. It also highlights a new aspect of career-focused programming that may gain increased attention, namely the intersection of international and domestic student programming. The combination of the three different departments emphasizes the multifaceted concerns related to international education in the Canadian context. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of international education for both the economic development and innovation in Canada.

National context

Canada's immigration policies have often been portrayed as offering international students a clear path to permanent residency. Since 2008, the Canadian government has implemented several changes to make studying in Canada more attractive for international students, including the creation of lucrative "study and stay" programs which have given Canada a distinct competitive advantage in recruiting international students. Canada's choice to have a more open policy towards international students has made it an international education power house, particularly given the change in atmosphere and polices in the United States and the United Kingdom in the past four years (Civinini, 2018a). The goals outlined in the 2014 CIES of reaching 450,000 students by 2022 was surpassed in 2017 with over 494,000 students opting to study in Canada, and in 2018 enrolments jumped again with 572,415[2] international students studying in Canada (CBIE, 2018a, 2018c). Student surveys provide clear indications that the attractive and open immigration policies have played a central role to increased enrolments (CBIE, 2018a).

International students and internationalization are strategically important to the future of Canada's GDP growth and prosperity. Canada is looking to retain international students as skilled immigrants after they have completed their studies and has released strategies to this end, both for recruiting international students and for retaining them long-term (Birchard, 2005; CBIE, 2015; CBIE, 2016a; Lokhande, 2016). Thus, creating career-focused programing that supports international students in their transition from studies to work/immigration would benefit all stakeholders involved, including HEIs, students, and governments.

The role of provinces, territories and regions

An approach to solving some of the demographic challenges of sparsely populated regions in Canada has been the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP) (Seidle, 2013; Suter & Jandl, 2008). PNPs differ between provinces, and frequently change according to the labour market needs of the specific province. In the context of Canadian federalism, the division of powers provides the provinces and territories the authorization to create responsive immigration programs including programs to retain international students. Although subject to frequent shifts, many PNPs include specific international graduate streams or streams focused on retaining international students in the province where they have completed their studies. Beyond provincial pathways, regional and local initiatives have become increasingly popular, particularly in the Maritimes. Nova Scotia has implemented the successful EduNova Program, a comprehensive approach designed to retain international students in their province after graduation. In 2018, this program has been expanded to include the other three Atlantic provinces and is now rebranded as "Study and Stay" (IRCC, 2018a). The program supports students throughout their studies, connecting them to employers, providing mentorship and career guidance and generally supporting

[2] CBIE Figures based on IRCC data as of December 2018.

student's transitions to careers (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). The success of the EduNova program is an excellent example of collaboration between HEIs and local programs in creating career-focused programming to support their retention in the region.

The use of locally focused programs has a distinct advantage as adjustments can be quick and focused on the needs of the local employers and students. Students benefit from local initiatives, as they help facilitate the creation of connections for students during their studies and prepare students for the next steps towards immigration. As noted by Seidle (2012), the specific histories and parameters of the programs in each province are unique and need to be acknowledged when designing policies for the specific region, focusing on the specific needs of the stakeholders involved, including employers, students and institutions. Both national and regional governments recognize international students as potential contributors to economic revitalization and utilizing this information, HEIs and regional governments are able to implement targeted programming and supports for students to retain them in the regions where students have completed their studies. HEIs are in a great position to play a liaison role between government, students, and local employers. However, it is interesting to note that many HEIs are not strategically engaged with local talent retention initiatives. In 2015, a report noted that 26% of colleges and universities in Canada engage with the local government in order to help more international students stay on after graduation (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). These programs highlight the role of provinces and regional programming in supporting federal government initiatives and immigration pathways to retain international graduates in regions across Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

The immigration policies and processing timelines of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) play a central role in international education in Canada. IRCC serves as the gatekeeper, providing the documentation required to study in Canada, with the issuance of study permits, temporary resident visas (TRVs), and Electronic Travel Authorizations (eTAs) that allow international students to come and study in Canada. The common delays in the processing of Canadian visa/permit applications in many countries around the world creates a major challenge for many international students. Missing the first few weeks or even the first semester due to visa/permit delays can impact the long-term success and experience. In the case of international students, the effect of delays and absences is even more pronounced as they are unable to form the networks and community bonds that are so important for all students in the first weeks of starting their post-secondary experience. Co-op work permits, study permit renewals, and post-graduation work permits often face delays, which in turn has negative consequences for many international students looking to gain work experience during and after their studies.

Although many students have the proper work authorization with the PGWP, they have a limited time to attain the qualified work experience needed to qualify for the immigration streams such as the Canadian Experience Class. As a result, one of the most important steps in the process toward immigration is the attainment of employment, which meets the specific requirements as outlined by IRCC, which will allow international students to qualify for various immigration pathways. Issues related to processing times and government policy exacerbates the hesitation of employers to hire international students, as they view the potential complications as not worth the risk. The negative experiences of international

students when engaging with IRCC may also influence their decision-making process in deciding to stay in Canada long-term. Furthermore, there is a clear nexus of government policy, HEIs, and international students and a necessity to shift key areas like immigration document processing to have a collateral impact on the ability of graduates to transition to work. Failure to make such shifts could negatively influence international student graduates' ability to stay in Canada.

Evolution of internationalization

Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels was first defined as: “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 11). This definition attempts to be neutral so that it can be used to describe the phenomenon of internationalization more broadly, as internationalization has different outcomes and purposes, depending on the stakeholders involved (Knight, 2012). Building upon the definition provided by Knight, Hudzik (2011) promoted the idea of comprehensive internationalization as “a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education” (p. 6). Hudzik offers a call to action of all aspects of HEIs to implement the goals outlined in strategic internationalization plans, focusing on aspects sometimes overlooked in the discussions around internationalization, including, internationalization of the curriculum, development of intercultural competencies faculty/staff/students and providing supports for internationalization activities. In recent years there has also been an increasing emphasis on the rationale for internationalization as noted by definitions provided by scholars in the field, focused on providing a broader context and understanding of internationalization.

As noted by De Wit, Hunter, Howard and Egron-Polak, [internationalization is] “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society”(De Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015, p. 29). Knight expanded on her widely cited 2004 definition in 2015, to address the changing landscape of internationalization. Knight notes that “the intent of internationalization is not to become known as an international institution per se, but to use the “integration of international, intercultural or global dimensions into the goals, functions and delivery of education” as a means to improve or achieve academic objectives of the institution or socio-cultural, economic, or political goals of the country/region (Knight, 2015b, p. 108). Additionally, Knight made note of the fact that increasingly there is a focus on attempting to measure the outcomes of internationalization to showcase the academic benefits of internationalization. However there are challenges with the process of assessing these outcomes, particularly with the tendency to use quantitative data to showcase concrete results and highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to the process of assessing outcomes (Knight, 2015b, pp. 108-109). The evolution of the term and conceptualization of internationalization showcases the diversity of the term and the unique approaches that each HEI will utilize in internationalization activities in their own national, regional, and institutional context.

Internationalization at home (IaH)

The idea of developing intercultural competencies of domestic and international students is closely related to the concept of Internationalization at Home (IaH). IaH as a concept and programming approach has undergone various understandings of what it entails over the past decade, depending on the national and institutional setting (Beelen & Jones, 2015). IaH is "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments" (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 69). Importantly, this definition emphasizes the role of all students and not just international students. It also articulates the need to bring international and intercultural aspects into the curricula in a purposeful way, rather than a piecemeal approach of inserting international aspects into programs. Furthermore, it has been noted that in the "domestic learning environment", intercultural learning will likely extend beyond the given campus and the formal learning context can include other intercultural/international learning opportunities with the broader local community. The learning environment could include working with local cultural, ethnic, or religious groups, engaging international and domestic students in the classroom, and connecting with other forms of diversity in the classroom (Beelen & Jones, 2015). The importance of intercultural competencies and working with people from differing cultural backgrounds is particularly important in the context of increasing international enrolments and the prominence of employability outcomes and IaH provides an excellent opportunity to further these goals.

The concept of IaH was developed to give a higher profile to international activities occurring on campus. These activities include many different aspects, such as the intercultural and international dimensions with teaching and learning, extracurricular activities and engagement with local communities (Deardorff et al., 2012; Knight, 2012). Compared to an average of 30% of students opting to study abroad in Germany or 10% of students in the US, Canadian students studying abroad is significantly lower than their counterparts (CBIE, 2018a). IaH activities may provide a good opportunity particularly in the Canadian context, with the number of Canadian students studying abroad consistently around 3% of Canadian students per year. Although the 2019 CIES has outlined the provision of additional funding to allow Canadian students to study abroad, the majority of domestic students will complete their studies without having had an international experience via exchange. It is for these students in particular where utilizing the IaH model, especially with career-focused programming, could provide an effective option for making up these gaps of international/intercultural experiences. With the diversity that is often found on many Canadian campuses already, both in the domestic and international student population, the area of career-programming can be a key starting point for infusing intercultural learning into the student experience.

Motivations and challenges of increasing international enrolments.

A major focus of internationalization activities in the Canadian context has been a focus on increasing international enrolments (Government of Canada, 2014). The recruitment of international students for immigration impacts government policy makers and HEI leadership as they often work in tandem to promote the retention of international students (Desai-Trilokekar & El Masri, 2016; Desai-Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013). Many countries, including Canada, have created international education strategies that are focused on promoting themselves as a place to study, but also promoting programs to retain students as skilled immigrants after they have completed their studies (Birchard, 2005; CBIE, 2016a; Government of Canada, 2014; Lokhande, 2016). Significant financial benefits and a rise in international

rankings/reputation are motivating factors. In strategic plans, articulated reasons for focusing on internationalization include: preparing students for global citizenship, increasing intercultural understanding, international research, exchanges between HEIs, and international rankings (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Deardorff, Goodman, Charles, & Gee, 2018). With the clear focus of many institutions increasing international enrolments, there has to be a recognition of the duty of care associated with their recruitment practices and address the needs and expectations of their international student population. Increased international enrolments results in a diverse student-body at HEIs whose needs for career-focused programming are different from those who typically access the services, including career services. In many cases, international student programming/support or increased funding for frontline staff has not increased at the pace of increased international enrolments (Lowe, 2011). Many institutions are intent on continuing to increase enrolment, so adequate supports/programming for international students during their studies are necessary to mitigate negative experiences for students, faculty, and staff. These supports ran the gamut of the student experience including orientation activities, academic supports, health/wellness (including mental health).

The promotion of academic migration could influence the types of services that HEIs provide to their international student population such as career services, immigration advising, and general support to navigate the transition to long-term immigrants (Chaoimh & Sykes, 2012; Desai-Trilokekar & El Masri, 2016). Although there has been an increase in the student supports provided to international students by HEIs, the level of programming and support vary between different levels and sizes of institutions. While many institutions have invested in supports for international students, these vary and the supports offered to students may be focused on their initial start as students, rather than later in their student career when employability becomes an increasing concern (El Masri et al., 2015). Programs and support for international students have often struggled to keep pace with the rapid increase in the number of international students attending HEIs in Canada, as well as staying up to date with changes to immigration policy and the limitations placed on HEIs as to which staff members are able to provide immigration advice.

The Case for Comprehensive International Student Supports

Comprehensive support for international students is crucial for their success and well-being, covering all aspects from before they arrive to after they graduate. The challenges faced by international students, such as adapting to a new culture, finding social support, and achieving academic satisfaction, have been widely studied and documented (Ugwu & Adamuti-Trache, 2017; Ku et al., 2008; Woods & Homer, 2021; Hahm, 2021; Gopalan et al., 2019; Boranbayevna, 2020). Pre-arrival support, including providing information resources and extending induction periods, has been shown to be beneficial for international students (Woods & Homer, 2021).

In examining academic satisfaction and the intention to continue studying among international students, researchers have emphasized the importance of considering various factors, such as individual, social, academic, cultural, and institutional support systems (Gopalan et al., 2019). Additionally, attention has been given to the challenges international students face when they first arrive and how effectively host universities provide support for them (Boranbayevna, 2020). Post-graduation, there is a need to focus on understanding the career paths and decision-making processes of international students (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2013). The experiences and outcomes of international graduates on temporary post-graduation work permits has been examined, highlighting the significance

of post-study work opportunities in influencing students' decisions to study abroad (Trần et al., 2022). Overall, the research emphasizes the importance of taking a holistic approach to supporting international students, which includes addressing pre-arrival, academic, social, and post-graduation aspects to ensure their educational success and smooth transitions.

To provide comprehensive support for international students, educational institutions must develop a robust framework that caters to every stage of the student journey. Starting from their first contact with the institution, throughout their academic experience, and continuing even after graduation, this journey presents unique challenges and opportunities. A well-designed support system is more than just a tool; it serves as a roadmap for academic institutions to consistently deliver tailored and comprehensive support. It outlines the essential steps necessary to welcome, integrate, and develop international students, equipping them with the necessary resources to succeed academically, socially, and professionally throughout their educational journey and beyond.

How To Use This Guide

As mentioned in the previous section, this guide is a living document that can be updated and advanced as needed. The guide offers holistic, institution-wide perspectives, along with practical insights and resources to aid post secondary institutions in effectively supporting international students throughout various stages of their academic journey within post-secondary institutions. Administrators and practitioners can utilize this guide as a resource to assess the support systems within their own institutions. It provides avenues to determine areas that are working well, identify potential gaps, and foster the creation of resources and effective practices to promote ongoing dialogue and advance resource development within institutions.

The scope of the guide focuses on general international student populations, recognizing that international students are not a homogenous group and institutions need to exercise caution if they provide resources and supports from a one-size-fits-all approach (El Masri & Khan, 2022). International students have diverse needs, bring multiple perspectives, come from a variety of backgrounds and lived experiences, therefore they need tailored approaches to help them thrive in post-secondary environments.

Recognizing the complexity of international student populations, this guide acknowledges that it cannot comprehensively address specialized needs based on regions, countries of origin, specific identity markers or levels of study. However, this guide provides a foundational resource for institutions and practitioners to examine and assess support efforts from a holistic perspective, with the understanding that further specialized information and resources will be necessary to meet the unique needs of international students at each institution.

The guide adopts a student life cycle approach to organizing information into four key stages – Transition Towards, Transition In, Transition Through and Transition Beyond. Each stage includes corresponding supports provided throughout international student experiences at post-secondary institutions. The guide recognizes that student support is dynamic and not linear. Instead, students may often navigate various stages, supports and engagements during their academic journey. For instance, supports related to immigration, settlement, social engagement and wellbeing remain relevant throughout students' academic experiences.

In general, each area and related supports for the student life cycle (SLC) are outlined using the following sections.

Introduction: The introduction serves as a way into the SLC section, gives a brief overview and includes relevant references.

Description: The description offers a concise overview of the specific topic covered in that section, providing practitioners with a roadmap for understanding the key concepts and considerations relevant to supporting international students.

Guiding Principles: Guiding Principles: Drawing from established principles in international education, the guiding principles section articulates core values and approaches that underpin effective support for international students. Practitioners are encouraged to apply these principles as guiding frameworks across all stages of the international student life cycle to ensure consistent and student-centered support.

Questions for the institution: In each part of the guide, practitioners are prompted to reflect on critical questions tailored to the specific stage of the international student journey. These questions encourage institutions to assess their current practices, identify areas for improvement, and align their support efforts with the evolving needs of international students.

Foundational Supports: Foundational supports form the core of the resources provided to international students in all aspects of their academic journey. This section outlines core services and resources essential for addressing basic needs and facilitating smooth transitions throughout the student's journey.

Advanced Supports: Building upon foundational supports, practitioners are introduced to additional specialized resources and services tailored to address unique challenges or opportunities encountered by international students at specific parts of their journey. This section offers insights into advanced support strategies aimed at enhancing the student experience and promoting wellbeing. When applicable the foundational and advanced supports might be combined.

Support and Resource Delivery Options: Each part of the guide explores diverse delivery methods for providing support and resources to international students. Practitioners are encouraged to consider a range of delivery options, including in-person, virtual, and asynchronous formats, to ensure accessibility and flexibility tailored to the preferences and needs of students.

External Resources: Collaboration with external partners and organizations enriches the support ecosystem for international students at every stage and can advance the level of understanding, knowledge and capabilities for practitioners and their institutions. This section highlights external resources, such as community organizations and government agencies, to supplement and enhance institutional support efforts.

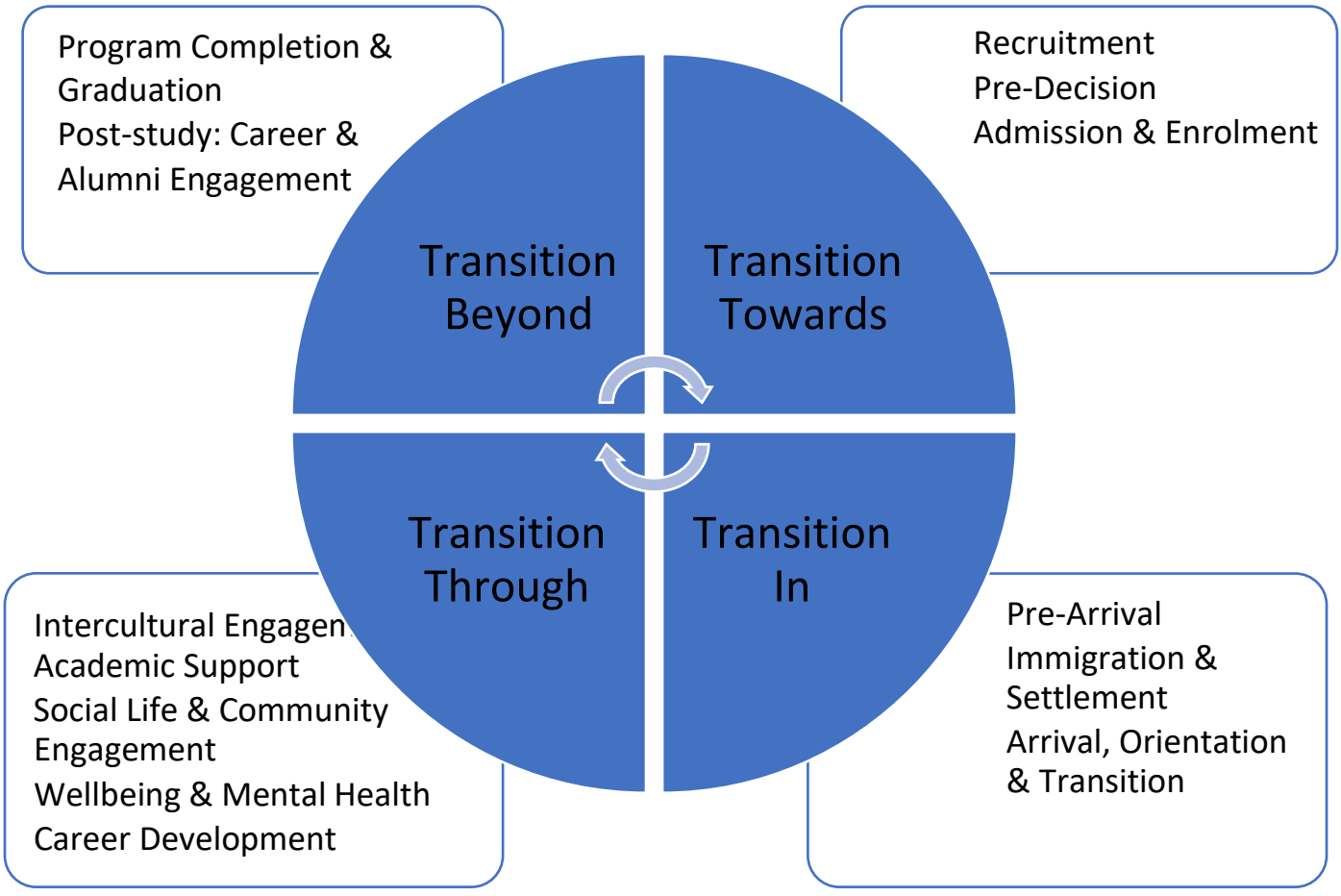
Post-secondary Institution Examples: Throughout the guide, examples of comprehensive support initiatives implemented by other post-secondary institutions are highlighted. These examples serve as practical models and inspiration aimed to offer insight and possibilities for adaptation and implementation, keeping in mind the need to adjust resources to reflect the unique context and needs of each institution.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities: Professional development and training opportunities are integral to practitioners' ongoing growth and effectiveness in supporting international students. Where applicable, this section highlights relevant training sessions, workshops, and certifications aimed at enhancing intercultural engagement, communication skills, and strategies to support the international student journey.

References: References to academic literature, effective practice guidelines, and relevant resources deepen practitioners' understanding of the topics covered in each part of the guide. These references offer further exploration and learning to access additional insights and perspectives to inform effective support efforts.

Overview of the Student Life Cycle

The adaptation of Alf Lizzio's Student Life Cycle (2011) offers a structured framework for organizing the stages and supports for the international student journey. As mentioned above, it is crucial to recognize that the needs for and engagement with supports may not occur in a linear fashion for students, given the diverse nature of their lived and academic experiences. Presenting the information in this format enhances accessibility and facilitates a clearer understanding of the interconnected stages and supports. Moreover, acknowledging that students may transition in and out of these stages highlights the dynamic and complex nature of international student experiences, allowing a more comprehensive approach to support.



Transition Towards

Pre-decision

The pre-decision stage is a critical opportunity for international students to engage with the institution and sets the stage for the future relationship between the student and the institution. During this stage international students and their families will develop impressions of the institution and an understanding of what to expect. As the relationship with the student begins, it is essential that institutions have already determined how students will be supported, who or what institutional unit takes the lead at this stage and how the institution will track and maintain the relationship. For many international students, deciding to leave their home country or a country of residence to study abroad signals a major life transition and requires thoughtful research, planning and decision making to make sound choices.

Depending on the structure of the institution, the International Student Recruitment team may have the most contact with students and their families. However, there is an institution-wide responsibility for the information provided and the mechanisms for sharing this information. Delving into the recruitment practices and strategies for institutions is beyond the scope of this guide, however collaboration across campus with the International Student Recruitment team is essential to provide a holistic and realistic view of the institution. The details, presentation, and accessibility of content provided on institutional websites (CBIE, 2021), communications and social media platforms will have critical influence on student decision making. Moreover, engagement with recruitment and admissions staff, academic advisers and academic units can make the difference between a student applying to an institution or deciding to go with another option. The information provided below can supplement recruitment strategies and provide guidance for how other units on campus can support international recruitment efforts.

A student's decision-making process often includes three elements: gathering information, analyzing information against individually/familial determined factors, and engaging in choice activities to make the final decision (Robbins & Judge, 2001). It is essential that institutions understand the 'push' and 'pull' factors that contribute to students' and their families in making post-secondary education decisions. At this stage, personal recommendations play a key role in helping students determine their institution of choice (CBIE, 2021). Therefore, the ongoing experience of current students on post-secondary campuses, plays a critical role in the student's decision-making process. The retention, satisfaction and success of students contributes to the feedback loop for prospective students hearing from their peers and having these impressions influence their decision.

According to the CBIE International Student Survey report (2021), key factors for international students in making their decision to come to Canada include seeing Canada as a safe and stable country, having a high quality of education and having a reputation as a generally tolerant and non-discriminatory society. Institutions can use these factors to make sure their engagement with students conveys these influences.

Description

The pre-decision phase for international students encompasses various factors and requires comprehensive support:

- **Supporting students in making informed decisions:** Institutions play a critical role in helping international students make informed decisions when choosing academic institutions and programs that will lead to their academic success and achievement of career and life goals. Students need to determine the factors that motivate them to study abroad and the factors that influence their choice of country, institution and program of study.
- **Research and Planning:** Research and planning involves investigating different countries, universities, and programs, as well as considering factors like cost, location, and academic reputation. Student planning also includes exploring available scholarships and financial aid and understanding admission requirements.
- **Information channels and content**: At this stage, prospective students need to comprehend the institution's mandate, principles and values. Students should clearly understand what the institution stands for in addition to what it has to offer. Institutional websites, communications and social media tend to be the key sources of information for students and their families. Clear and consistent messaging can help prospective students build confidence in the institution.
- **Application Process:** Students sometimes prepare and submit applications to multiple universities or programs, which may involve standardized test scores (such as TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, etc.), transcripts, letters of recommendation, and essays. Some students now use the application progression in their exploration and decision-making process. Institutions must ensure the application process is streamlined, straightforward, and transparent. Information that students are receiving from recruiters and other institutional representatives needs to be consistent with the website content and other communications received by the student.
- **Recruitment Practices:** The key practices include in-person recruitment, digital recruitment and virtual recruitment. Short- and long-term strategies need to align with Strategic Enrolment plans, institutional strategic plans and the overall structure of the institution. Recruitment efforts need to be transparent and help students and their families feel confidence in the institution.

Below are factors and considerations that can play a role in how students decide to study abroad, and choose their post-secondary institution and academic program.

Motivating Factors that contribute to student's decisions:

- Perception prestige and quality of education opportunities abroad
- Career goals and aspirations
- Familial and peer influences
- Availability of educational options in home country

International students have many considerations when choosing their study destination and institution including country, institution and programs of study. Below is a list of factors that contribute to these decisions.

Country / Location Factors:

- Geographic location and environment
- Political landscape
- Perceived stability and safety
- Cultural aspects and norms, cultural proximity
- Immigration requirements, processes and opportunities
- Language(s) spoken

- Lifestyle options
- Cost of Living
- Ease of settlement in the host country
- Family connections and established diaspora

Institution and Program of study:

- Perceived quality of education
- Reputation and global rankings of institution
- Discipline and program options
- Language of instruction and requirements
- Opportunities to improve English language skills
- Tuition and fees
- Financial support, availability of scholarships and funding opportunities
- Reputation of the Faculties / departments of interest
- Ease of the application process
- Variety of curricular and co-curricular options
- Availability of employment, career options and opportunities
- Availability of on-campus housing and accommodation options
- Accessible and responsive student supports
- Approaches to communication and access to information
- Sense of community and belonging

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Tailor supports to meet the diverse needs of international students. International students are not a homogenous group. Adopt inclusive practices that reflect students' individual, regional and cultural diversity.
- **Equity:** Ensure equal access to information, resources and opportunities. Consistently review practices and engagement to ensure barriers are understood and removed. Enhance the opportunity for students from diverse regions and backgrounds to have various study opportunities at the institutions.
- **Holistic Approach:** Address academic, personal, and career-related aspects. Students will be engaging with the institutions from an academic perspective while trying to imagine living in a new environment, engaging in co-curricular experiences and experiencing social engagement.
- **Ethical Practice:** Ensuring that institutions support students in making decisions that are in the best interests of the students and their families. This aspect can be increasingly challenging when institutions face financial challenges and constraints. However, the focus of recruiting and enrolling international students needs to be above and beyond, seeing students as a source of revenue.
- **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships to enhance support services. These include in-country high schools, higher education institutions, and third-partner organizations such as international education organizations, national agencies, and consulates.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly assess and refine support programs, information and communications content based on feedback, research and emerging needs. Ensure international enrolment strategies are responsive to students and their families evolving needs and expectations.

- **Culturally Appropriate and Regional Relevance:** Recognize and respect cultural differences and provide culturally appropriate content and support. Incorporate communication mechanisms and social media platforms that are meaningful and accessible for specific countries and regions.
- **Student-Centered:** Placing international students' and their families' needs and aspirations at the forefront to provide appropriate and relevant resources and support.

Questions

1. *How does the pre-decision stage for international students factor into the strategic enrolment planning of the institution?*
2. *How does the pre-decision and recruitment practices account for the cultural and regional diversity of international students?*
3. *What is the assessment practice of website and social media content and how does this relate to ongoing feedback from students and their families?*
4. *How does the institution ensure that the content is clear, accessible and up to date?*
5. *How does the institution provide timely and accurate information for students and families?*
6. *Are the initial processes that new students have to engage in easy to find and described with clarity (e.g., admission processes, housing applications, etc.)*
7. *Are staff across the institutions adequately trained to know how and what to communicate to students from a variety of regions and cultures?*

Foundational Support

Institutions need to leverage opportunities to engage with prospective students and leave a lasting impression. The pre-decision stage includes opportunities to help students connect with an institution that will meet their needs and help them reach their academic and career goals. In supporting the pre-decision stage of prospective students the following minimal requirements should be considered:

Clear and accessible information provided in-person and online:

- Provide through website, social media platforms, emails, and written communications
- Content should include information in key areas related to decision making:
    - An overview and highlights about the institution, location and campus culture
    - Application and admissions processes
    - Faculty and Academic programs options
    - Student supports and co-curricular opportunities
    - Immigration and travel details

Prospective students need opportunities to consult with staff within the institution, including:

- International recruitment officers
- Immigration and settlement advisers
- Admissions staff
- Faculty advisers

Targeted information for Families should be provided, including:

- Information designed to connect families with the institution

- Recruitment information and materials provided in multiple languages to accommodate communications with families

Recruitment strategies and engagement

- Global market planning
- Targeted events - in-person, digital and virtual (e.g., Live Q&A sessions)

Advanced Support

Following are more specialized supports that can create enhanced opportunities, programs, and activities to engage with students in this stage.

Student ambassadors for prospective students

- Programs designed to recruit and support students through connections with student ambassadors.
- Contact opportunities with current students and alumni – peer-to-peer student engagement for prospective students.
- Online platforms that provide opportunities for students to form peer groups and engage with other students (e.g, Unibuddy).

Home country information sessions

- Part of the international recruitment planning and strategies
- Leveraging international travel of staff and faculty
- Engaging alumni in country to support information sessions and recruitment efforts

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

- **Workshops and seminars:** Engage prospective international students with informative sessions focusing on academic opportunities, cultural immersion, and practical tips for studying abroad, fostering a sense of community and addressing their queries before making crucial decisions.
- **Peer-to-peer engagement and programs:** Facilitate connections between current and prospective international students, allowing for firsthand insights into campus life, academic rigour, and integration challenges, fostering trust and camaraderie as they navigate the decision-making process.
- **Recruitment events – virtual and in-person**: Offer diverse platforms, both virtual and in-person, for universities to showcase their offerings, enabling prospective international students to interact with faculty, alumni, and admissions representatives, providing comprehensive information and fostering personal connections.
- **Advising and consultation:** Provide personalized guidance and support to international students at every step of their application journey. Create opportunities to address concerns, offer tailored advice, and ensure clarity on academic pathways and visa requirements while instilling confidence and ease in decision-making.
- **Relationship development:** Cultivate long-term relationships with prospective international students through consistent communication, personalized interactions, and targeted outreach

efforts, nurturing trust and rapport that extends beyond the initial recruitment phase, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment to the institution.

External Resources

1. **Government and National Organizations:**
   - Government and national organizations such as EduCanada and CBIE play a crucial role in providing information and resources for prospective international students. They offer valuable insights into studying in Canada, including information on educational institutions, programs, scholarships, and visa requirements. Additionally, they often organize events, webinars, and workshops to help students navigate the process of studying abroad.
2. **Embassies and consulates:**
   - Embassies and consulates can be important sources of support and information for international students considering studying abroad. They can provide guidance on immigration applications and regulations, and embassy services available to students. Additionally, they sometimes play an advocacy role for students once they are established in their host country.
3. **High schools and Post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs):**
   - High schools and post-secondary institutions can be valuable partners in engaging with prospective international students seeking information about academic programs, admission requirements, and campus life. They can support collaborative recruitment events, campus tours, and information sessions to help students explore their options and make informed decisions about their educational journey.
4. **Recruitment Platforms:**
   - Recruitment platforms such as IDP, Kaplan, and WES offer comprehensive services to assist international students in their pre-decision stage. These platforms provide information about academic programs, institutions, admission requirements, and application procedures. They also offer personalized guidance, support services, and access to educational resources to help students navigate the complex process of applying to study abroad.

Post-Secondary Institutions Examples

1. **College of the Rockies:** College of the Rockies' Future Students International page provides clear information to help students get acquainted with the College before they are admitted. This site includes engaging videos of students describing their experience at the College. The videos are available with translated subtitles in Japanese, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.

2. **Vancouver Community College (VCC):** Vancouver Community College provides information sessions and one-on-one appointments for prospective students. VCC also includes robust website content for prospective students including information about the institution, featured testimonials from international students, student success stories and graduate outcomes.

3. **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU):** Kwantlen Polytechnic University International Admissions Website includes information about the merits of KPU and videos with KPU international students. In addition, KPU provides an FAQ page specifically for prospective students available in English and Simplified Chinese.

4. **Thompson Rivers University (TRU):** Thompson Rivers University provides an interactive Future Students website. While the content is not specific to international students, students can pick and choose the relevant pieces of information, customize a student checklist and view the TRU International Viewbook online. TRU has also introduced a pre-admission service for students of the following nationalities: Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Iran and Nigeria.

5. **Simon Fraser University (SFU):** SFU provides extensive information to support prospective international students. Through their See Yourself at SFU website, virtual events, and social media platforms, they offer information on academic programs, admission procedures, and campus resources, including a comprehensive online international student checklist.

6. **Dalhousie University:** Provides a section for prospective students under their Admissions website, 'In the Classroom and Beyond', gives international students an understanding of what life might be like on and off campus, and provides related information including working with agents and how to submit applications from countries experiencing conflict.

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Admission and Enrolment

As post-secondary institutions continue to attract a diverse international student body, it is essential to provide comprehensive support to international students throughout the admission and enrolment process. Determining admission and enrolment practices and strategies for institutions is beyond the scope of this guide, however, collaboration across campus with Admission and Enrolment teams is essential to provide a holistic experience for international students. The information provided below can supplement admission and enrolment strategies and provide guidance for how other units on campus can support these processes.

For many international students their post-secondary academic journey starts with the Admission office. Their experiences with the admissions staff and processes at their chosen institution, sets the stage for future enrolment and retention and the tone for their overall impression of the institution. Often, the Admission office is one of the first points of contact for prospective students. As a result, Admission offices need to be well resourced and responsive to student needs and inquiries. The standards set by the institution to admit students need to align with the strategic vision and values of the institution related to the academic success of students. Institutions reaching their enrolment and retention goals depends on the work of admissions (Jarek-Prinz, 2010 ACCRAO 2010).

Description

Admission and enrolment management for international students in post-secondary institutions refers to the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of policies and practices aimed at facilitating the successful transition of international students into academic programs and retention throughout their academic program. Providing effective admission and enrolment management support is crucial for attracting, engaging and retaining international students in post-secondary institutions. Enrolment management is a critical element of post-secondary institutions and specific consideration of how international students fit into the overall management is essential for institution to be successful. Enrolment management of international students starts with recruitment and admissions; however, the entire student life cycle needs to be considered for a holistic approach.

There are many resources that define and provide guidance for adopting successful enrolment management strategies for post-secondary institutions. This area is an essential part of international student experience, but beyond the scope of this guide. This section will focus on the initial stages of the enrolment funnel, admission and enrolment of international students; however, the entire guide relates to strategic enrolment management of international students as it considers all aspects of the student life cycle. Focus needs to be on attention to the recruitment and bringing students into institutions and how they are supported throughout their experience that leads to their well-being and academic goals and accomplishments.

Guiding Principles

- **Accessibility:** Ensure that the admission and enrolment process is accessible to international students by providing clear information, guidance, and support using multiple platforms (e.g., website content, emails, information session, and contact with admission officers).

- **Equity:** Promote equity by removing barriers and biases in the admission process, ensuring fair and equal opportunities for all international students that aligns with domestic student admission, regardless of student or circumstances.
- **Transparency:** Maintain transparency throughout the admission and enrolment process, providing clear and accurate information on requirements, procedures, timelines, and expectations.
- **Inclusivity:** Foster an inclusive environment that embraces diversity and respects the unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of international students, ensuring they feel valued and welcomed.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Cultivate cultural competency among staff and faculty involved in the admission process, promoting awareness, understanding, and sensitivity to cultural norms, customs, and communication styles of international students.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of admission and enrolment support services for international students, soliciting feedback, and implementing enhancements to meet their evolving needs and expectations.
- **Global Perspective:** Embrace a global perspective in recruitment and admissions, actively seeking to attract a diverse and talented pool of international students who contribute to the cultural, academic, and social vitality of the institution.

Questions

1. *Are the admission processes accessible and fair for international students, including those with language barriers or disabilities?*
2. *Does the institution provide clear and transparent information on admission requirements, fees, and financial aid options for international students?*
3. *What support services are offered to assist international students during the admission and enrolment process?*
4. *Is there personalized guidance and assistance to address the individual needs of international students?*
5. *Are our staff and faculty equipped with culturally appropriate skills to engage effectively with international students?*
6. *Is there regular evaluation and improvement of admission and enrolment support services for international students?*

Foundational Support

Clear and Accessible Information:

- Provide easily accessible information on admission requirements, application procedures, and deadlines specifically tailored to international students.
- Offer multilingual resources and support services to assist international students in understanding and completing the application process.
- Be clear on the financial cost and true cost of living for the area.

Streamlined Application Process:

- Utilizing EducationPlannerBC or the institutions direct application portal, ensure there are clear instructions on the required documents and how they may be submitted.

- Provide guidance on preparing and submitting academic transcripts, English language proficiency test scores, and other necessary documentation.
- From the student perspective the admission and enrolment processes include the following steps:
    1. Research academic programs and admission requirements.
    2. Determine intake timelines (i.e., September, January, May, July) and application dates.
    3. Ensure the admission requirements are met, including academic and English proficiency requirements and potentially country specific requirements.
    4. Complete online application and provide required information and documents. These may include personal information, academic records, and test scores (if applicable).
    5. Submit additional application materials such as letters of recommendation, transcripts and essays.
    6. If applicable, pay application fee.
    7. Once a decision is received, obtain the Letter of Admission or Offer letter for the immigration processes and Provincial Attestation Letter.
    8. Apply for scholarships.
    9. If applicable, pay deposit.
    10. Register for courses (If it is a student responsibility to register for classes, be clear on how that it completed, dates, and provide support for academic advising well in advance of registration. International students are also more likely to need manual waivers for course enrolment that should be addressed before registration date.

Financial Aid and Scholarships:

- Offer financial aid and scholarship opportunities specifically targeted towards international students to help alleviate the financial burden of studying abroad.
- Provide information on available funding options, application requirements, and deadlines to assist international students in securing financial support.

Regular Assessment of admission and enrolment practices:

- Conduct regular assessments and surveys to gather feedback from international students and identify areas for improvement in admission and enrolment support services.
- Collaborate with international education organizations and government agencies to stay updated on best practices and regulatory changes impacting international student recruitment and enrolment.

Advanced Support

Personalized Assistance:

- Assign dedicated international admissions officers to support international students throughout the application and enrolment process, addressing their individual needs, concerns, and goals to enhance their overall experience and success and offering tailored assistance and resources.
- Offer virtual or in-person information sessions and workshops to address common questions and concerns of international applicants.

Application Fee Waivers or Reductions:

- Consider offering application fee waivers or reductions for international students to alleviate financial barriers to applying to the institution.

Enhanced Online Application Portals:

- Implement user-friendly online application portals specifically designed for international students, allowing for easy submission of application materials and tracking of application status.

Document Translation Services:

- Provide access to translation services for international students to translate academic transcripts, recommendation letters, medical documents, and other required documents into the language of the institution.

External Resources

These external resources can provide support and guidance for institutions to enhance their efforts in supporting international students during the admission and enrolment stage.

1. **British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT):**
   - BCCAT coordinates transfer and admissions policies among post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.
2. **Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC):**
   - ARUCC is a national association representing registrars and admissions officers in Canadian universities and colleges.
3. **Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC):**
   - ACCC represents colleges and institutes across Canada, including registrar offices involved in admissions and student records management.
4. **Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) - British Columbia (BC) Branch:**
   - The BC Branch of ARUCC represents registrars and admissions officers specifically in British Columbia's universities and colleges
5. **AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers):**
   - AACRAO offers resources and professional development opportunities for admissions and enrolment professionals, including guidance on best practices for international student admissions.
6. **TAICEP (The Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals):**
   - TAICEP provides resources and training for professionals involved in the evaluation of international academic credentials, offering guidance on credential evaluation standards and best practices for admissions.
7. **Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE):**
   - CBIE provides resources and professional development opportunities for Canadian institutions seeking to attract and support international students, including guidance on admissions policies, recruitment strategies, and student services.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

North Island College (NIC): North Island College provides a specific webpage for Admitted international students, that includes key steps to follow.

University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC): University of Northern British Columbia provides specific admission requirements for students from international high schools including PDF's for 40 countries.

University of British Columbia (UBC): University of British Columbia provides a general and degree-specific admission requirements webpage for the Vancouver and Okanagan campuses, students can access specific information for over 80 countries, using a drop-down menu.

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Pre-Arrival

The experience of international students before they arrive is a critical period for institutions to help them have a smooth transition into their studies once on campus. In this guide, the pre-arrival stage refers to the period for international students when they have been admitted to the institution, but have not yet left their home country / country of residence. Pre-arrival resources and supports can play a crucial role in helping students and their families feel less anxious, more prepared and more connected to the institution as they start their post-secondary journey. One of the primary objectives of this stage is to help students understand the essential tasks and procedures they need to complete before coming to Canada to begin their studies. Essential procedures include immigration processes, making travel arrangements and securing appropriate accommodation.

The pre-arrival resources can also provide information about what life might look like in their host country and new institution, and help students connect with key support staff (Cheng, 2023). The resources offered at this stage can also help students better understand what might contribute to their academic and personal success at the institution. These supports are not meant to replace the need for on-campus orientations and should be coordinated and aligned with other orientation and transition activities. However, they can provide an opportunity to scaffold information using a layered approach to help students deepen their understanding and increase their chances of feeling connected and more prepared once on campus.

Description

Institutions can take time during the pre-arrival stage to effectively engage with students through email, online interactions and social media platforms. For some institutions, providing in-country pre-arrival information sessions can further enhance their connection to the students and help them feel a part of the campus community even before they leave their home country. Information shared with students at this stage should include clear instructions and checklists of the tasks and procedures needed to travel to Canada, study in Canada (e.g., immigration needs), settle within Canada (e.g., housing, banking, etc.) and begin their studies.

Guiding Principles

- **Accessibility:** Institutions must ensure that information is accessible to all students, regardless of their background and abilities. Using accessible approaches can include providing multilingual and easily understandable resources about the application process, immigration requirements and financial matters, as well as offering tailored support for students with disabilities or special needs. Consider diverse ways of learning and gathering information, such as videos, live virtual sessions, website, email, print, etc.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Equity and inclusion initiatives for international students begin with tailored pre-arrival support, ensuring resources and information are accessible and incorporate many lived experiences and identities. By prioritizing equitable approaches, institutions can provide a more welcoming and inclusive environment from the outset, fostering a sense of belonging and demonstrating the value of equity for all students.

- **Setting realistic expectations:** Engagement with students during the pre-arrival stage should help them understand what to expect when they arrive and orient at the institution. Institutions should be cautious about providing service during the pre-arrival stage in a manner that is not sustainable after the students begin their studies.
- **Timely and digestible information:** It is critical to exercise caution in determining the timing and amount of information to be shared with students at this stage. In an effort to make sure students are well prepared, sometimes there can be a tendency to share too much information at a time when students can feel overwhelmed and may not have all of the context needed to make sense of the information.

Questions

1. *Are region, geographic and cultural specific resources in place?*
2. *Which department takes the lead on connecting with students pre-arrival?*
3. *Is there a collaboration between the international student recruitment, admission, and support teams to ensure consistent information and smooth transitions?*
4. *Is there information available in multiple languages?*
5. *Are families considered when developing content and programming?*

Foundational Support

Providing essential information for students to start their relationship with the institution and journey to Canada is key to students feeling engaged and supported at the pre-arrival stage. The information shared at this stage must include:

Pre-arrival immigration (More detailed information will be included in the immigration section):

- Applying for a study permit
- Travel visas
- Understanding work authorization

Financial Planning:

- Provide realistic information to help students plan their finances, including tuition fees and options for paying these fees, living expenses, travel costs, and any unforeseen expenses.

Settlement:

- Related information to help students prepare for their transition into a new country and place to live. Depending on where the student is leaving from, some of these tasks will need to be done upon arrival, but making students aware at this stage can help them prepare:
    - *Housing Resources*: Securing suitable accommodation, either on-campus or off-campus, involves understanding lease or rental agreements, payment terms, and potentially arranging for roommates. Students preparing to live on-campus will begin their engagement with the institution's Residence Services.

- *Health Insurance*: Ensuring adequate health insurance coverage is essential for international students for ongoing health maintenance and medical emergencies.
- *Banking*: Making students aware of what will be needed to open a bank account tailored for international students, considering fees, transfer options, and currency exchange services.

Cultural Preparation:

- Learning about the Canada's cultures, language, norms, and potential challenges to help engage students and get them prepared for their transition into living in a new country.
    - Provide background on the Indigenous people of the area.

Travel Planning:

- Helping students understand what is needed to travel to Canada and their institution destination. The planning can include determining travel options, what requirements might be in place to travel and how student can get to the institution destination, if this is different from where they arrive into Canada.

Course selection and registration:

- Providing support for students with their course registration. Timely information about what they need to do and when. Course registration processes may be different than what the student is expecting, so the process needs to be made clear. For example, for some institutions students may need to register in June/July for their courses for the next two terms or full-year. Other institutions may register the students in the courses as part of their program.
    - International students are more likely to not have their pre-requisites from their previous institution recognized in the registration system. Be clear that students need to check this in advance to ensure any courses requiring pre-requisites have the pre-requisite noticed and it will not stop their registration.

Prepare for arrival and orientation programs:

- Providing information to students about registering for orientation activities and other welcome and transition activities. Remember to be clear in the timelines. For example, saying "Immediately upon arrival, apply for your MSP" may mean that a student does it while at the airport while in reality it should be done within the first two weeks.

Pre-arrival online programs and events:

- Engaging students in pre-arrival online events gives the opportunity to share important and timely information while giving students insights into student life and the culture of the institution.

Peer to peer connections:

- Opportunities for students to learn from one another's lived experiences and develop important connections and networks that will help students engage with the institution and feel a part of the community.

Website Content:

- Providing relevant and accessible website content helps students navigate the pre-arrival stage effectively and sets the stage for a smooth transition to campus. Content should be written and formatted with the international student journey in mind, highly searchable content and ease of viewing with a cell phone.

Communications with Students:

- *Emails*: Emails can help institutions share important information with students while setting a welcoming and supportive tone. By using emails to share information, students can go through the content at their own pace. Hyperlinks can be included to direct students to more detailed and timely information. Emails are an effective way to share welcome messages with students while giving them pertinent and timely information. Emails can also be used to share reminders to students about the tasks and processes they must complete in preparation to travel to Canada and begin their studies. It is essential that emails have the same messaging (i.e. nothing new) that is not clearly stated on the website. Many times, one gets updated but not the other creating unnecessary confusion for the student.
- *Online Meetings*: Engaging with students online helps give students a personal touch and an opportunity to ask questions and get more personalized information. This is also an opportunity for students to get connected with key staff members, experience a welcoming presence and get a preview of what to expect on campus.

Social Media Engagement:

- Engaging with students through social media has become an essential component to the student communication plans. This practice can be more effective if platforms in target market regions and countries are utilized. For example: Weibo, WeChat and Douyin in China; Quora in India; and Telegram, Discord and WeChat in African nations;

Advanced Support

Advanced Online pre-arrival sessions:

- Providing a pre-arrival online information session for students has become more the norm for most institutions that welcome international students. Online session offerings can be advanced if there are the resources to offer these sessions in multiple time zones and at different points in the pre-arrival journey. Providing a series of pre-arrival sessions to help students engage with material in timely ways in more manageable circumstances. For example, institutions could cycle through three levels of pre-arrival sessions:
    - ***Level 1****:* An information session could be provided after students are admitted and help to communicate the next steps for accepting the institutions offer, making travel arrangements and the steps needed to start the immigration process.
    - ***Level 2*****:** This session could focus on connecting students with current students at the institutions and having a chance to ask questions and get first hand information abut being an international student in Canada.

- ***Level 3*:** Focused on securing housing and other settlement information. In addition, at this stage, students may also benefit from assistance with course registration.

In-person pre-arrival / pre-departure sessions in home countries:

- These events provide students with essential information and support their transition to a new country. These sessions provide an introduction to the institution and allows for students to get a personalized response to their questions. Students attending these sessions also have the opportunity to meet other students going to their institution and a chance to start to build supportive relationships.

Videos on student life:

- Creating short videos for websites and social media platforms is another way to share information and give students a perspective about student life on campus. These videos can include other students, key staff members, and highlight support services that will help students with their transition. Using videos to help share information allows students to take in the information at their own pace and allows the institution to share information more broadly as needed.

Specialized supports for families:

- Family influence and engagement can play a big role in the international student journey. Institutions need to find ways to engage with families and share information. It is not uncommon for students coming to Canada to study with English as an additional language, to live with families that are not fluent or have no English language skills.
- Attention should be paid to providing information in multiple languages or formats to help families feel a part of the process and highlight the importance of their part in the student's journey. Institutions might also consider holding information sessions specifically for families. Information shared could include an overview and highlights about the institution, the processes needed to complete to join the institution, travel to and life in Canada, and expectations of the students while at the institution.

Advanced programs for peer-peer connections:

- Programs to help students connect with one another will aid in newly admitted students feeling a part of the university community earlier in the student journey. Students who feel more connected are more likely to transition from admitted students to enrolled or registered students thereby helping institutions decrease attrition.
- More and more platforms are being developed to create online communities for students and give them the opportunities to engage with each other and their peers on campus (e.g., Unibuddy) and choose student groups that the want to connect with, potentially based on academic interest, hobby, sport activities, etc.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

- **Online information workshops:** Institutions can conduct virtual sessions to provide international students with detailed information about the application process, immigration requirements,

academic programs considerations, and campus life, allowing students to participate remotely and ask questions in real-time.

- **Video series:** Institutions can produce a series of informative videos covering various aspects of the pre-arrival stage for international students. These topics can include the topics listed above, as well as information regarding settlement considerations for students, including starting how to start looking for housing options, making financial arrangements and planning their travel, offering visually engaging content that students can access at their convenience for detailed guidance.
- **In-person workshops (in country):** Institutions organize workshops in students' home countries to offer guidance on the application process, visa procedures, and cultural adaptation, providing an opportunity for face-to-face interaction and personalized support.
- **Recruitment offered programs on and off-campus:** Recruitment practitioners sometimes offer programs that showcase campus facilities, academic offerings, and student services both on campus and through off-campus events, allowing prospective students to explore their options and engage with representatives directly.
- **Pre-arrival online course:** Institutions can design comprehensive online courses comprising multiple sessions that cover topics such as academic expectations, cultural orientation, and practical tips for living in Canada, allowing students to progress at their own pace and access resources before their arrival. These courses can be offered through the institutions course delivery mechanisms to introduce students to these platforms before they begin their studies.
- **Information sharing:** Through website content, emails, and social media platforms, institutions share essential information about the application process, immigration requirements, scholarships, and campus resources, ensuring that international students stay informed and connected regardless of their location.

External Resources

1. **Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE):**
    - CBIE plays a vital role in supporting and advocating for post-secondary institutions across Canada. Through their website, publications and online Community Hubs, CBIE offers guidance on topics such as immigration in Canada, international student experiences and education abroad programs. Additionally, CBIE provides benchmark information based on international student survey data that can help international students gain more context for life and studying in Canada. CBIE also organizes webinars, workshops, and conferences providing professional development opportunities for international education practitioners and departments.
2. **Peer Connections platforms (e.g., Unibuddy):**
    - Peer Connections platforms such as Unibuddy provide opportunities for prospective international students to connect with current students and alumni. These platforms offer virtual chat sessions, Q&A forums, and mentorship programs where prospective students can ask questions, seek advice, and gain insights into life at their chosen institution. Peer

Connections platforms facilitate peer-to-peer support and help ease the transition for international students before they arrive on campus.

3. **National Departments - Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada (IRCC) & Global Affairs Canada (GAC):**
    - Through their website and diplomatic missions abroad, Global Affairs Canada provides information on travel advisories manages diplomatic relations and provides consular assistance. These areas can be of help to institutions in gaining deeper understanding of the diplomatic and political relationships with particular regions. This information may play a role in how we engage with students and their families and provide more insight. IRCC provides detailed information about immigration policies and entry requirements ration policies. They also offer guidance on obtaining study permits, temporary resident visas, and work permits, ensuring that international students are well-informed and prepared for their journey to Canada.
4. **External Agencies (e.g., Kaplan, ICEF, IDP):**
    - External agencies such as Kaplan, ICEF, and IDP offer comprehensive services to assist international students in the pre-arrival stage. These agencies provide guidance on choosing the right academic program, applying to institutions, and navigating the visa application process. They also offer support with travel arrangements, accommodation options, and cultural orientation, ensuring that international students have a smooth transition to their new academic environment.

Post-Secondary Institutions Examples

1. **Camosun College**: Camosun College provides comprehensive pre-arrival information for current international students through extensive website content, online contact with international advisors and online student chat engagement with international student ambassadors.
2. **Vancouver Island University - Pre-arrival Course: https://international.viu.ca/d2l.** Topics in the course incudes helping students learn more about:
    - Learn more about what it means to be a student at VIU
    - Learn how to select, enroll and register in classes
    - Discover important services available to students at VIU
    - Increase your knowledge of Canadian Culture
    - Learn about the challenges and opportunities involved in moving from one culture to another
    - Become more prepared for new life at VIU
3. **University of Victoria**: University of Victoria provides a Pre-Arrival Checklist and comprehensive content to help students prepare for life at the university and in Canada. Topics include Immigration considerations, Packing, travel and transportation, Campus resources, Fee payment, Health and safety resources, Housing and move-in support, pre-arrival tasks, etc.
4. **University of Calgary:** University of Calgary provides an extensive pre-arrival program for international students. **https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/iss/life-ucalgary/first-year-international-student-programming/pre-arrival-program**

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Transition In

Immigration and Settlement

International students seeking to study in Canada are provided with a range of services aimed at facilitating a seamless transition and enhancing their overall academic experience. These services, collectively known as immigration and settlement support, are designed to assist students with the various challenges associated with relocating to a foreign country, such as navigating immigration procedures and finding suitable housing. By providing these support services, Canadian educational institutions are able to attract and retain talented students from around the world, further enriching the country's diverse academic landscape.

The support provided to international students in Canada aims to ensure a smooth transition into the Canadian education system and society. This involves pre-arrival orientation programs, housing assistance, academic advising, and language support. Additionally, Canadian educational institutions provide resources such as international student offices, counseling services, and peer support programs to help students adjust to the social and cultural aspects of Canadian life.

Moreover, Canadian educational institutions offer supplementary courses, workshops, and seminars to help students develop their professional and cultural competencies.

Description

Canadian immigration support is a comprehensive set of services designed to assist international students with navigating Canada's immigration system and adhering to applicable regulations. The ultimate goal of this assistance is to ensure a smooth and lawful transition for students arriving in Canada for educational pursuits.

For international students in British Columbia, the concept of "settlement" encompasses the process of adapting to a new environment, integrating into Canadian society, and building a stable and fulfilling life while pursuing their studies. This includes a range of support services such as health insurance, cultural orientation, and other crucial elements to ensure a successful transition.

Post-Secondary institutions' international offices in British Columbia have adapted swiftly to the evolving landscape of international student immigration policies. With continuous policy changes and global politics impacting the mobility of students, international offices have stepped up efforts to provide comprehensive support. They're also collaborating closely with campus partners to enhance settlement assistance. By leveraging resources and expertise across various departments, these offices aim to ensure that incoming international students feel welcomed and equipped to navigate the challenges of settling into a new environment. Through proactive measures and collaborative initiatives, they are fostering a supportive ecosystem that promotes the successful integration of international students into the fabric of campus life.

Guiding Principles

Immigration and Settlement support for international students are guided by principles that promote:

- **Student-Centric Approaches:** Prioritizing the needs and well-being of international students, recognizing their unique challenges and aspirations in a new cultural and academic setting.
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity:** Fostering an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring that support services are culturally sensitive and respectful of students' backgrounds.
- **Global Citizenship:** CBIE emphasizes the development of global citizenship among students. It encourages educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to engage with their peers.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** CBIE facilitates partnerships and collaborations between Canadian institutions and their international counterparts. This includes academic partnerships, research collaborations, and other initiatives that contribute to the global exchange of knowledge.
- **Advocacy for International Students:** Supports policies and practices that enhance the welfare and experiences of international students, addressing issues such as immigration policies, work opportunities, and social integration.
- **Crisis Management and Support:** International offices provide support and guidance in times of crisis, whether related to global events, public health emergencies, or other challenges affecting international students. Practitioners collaborate with organizations and authorities to ensure the well-being of students.
- **Flexibility and Responsiveness:** Being flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of international students, adapting support services based on feedback, changing immigration policies, and emerging challenges.
- **Legal Compliance and Advocacy:** Ensuring that all support services adhere to legal requirements and regulations while also advocating for the rights and well-being of international students within the broader legal framework.

Questions

1. Immigration Processes:

- *What are the principal stages involved in the immigration process for international students and how is the institution providing support for each stage?*
- *Does the institution provide comprehensive information on acquiring a study permit, including application procedures and timelines?*

2. Compliance and Regulations:

- *How can the institution support international students in ensuring they abide by immigration regulations during their stay?*
- *What are the key conditions of the study permit that students should be cognizant of and how is this information shared with students?*

3. Visa Services:

- *Are there supplementary visa services provided for international students, such as assistance with temporary resident visas (TRVs) or electronic travel authorizations (eTAs)?*
- *What support is available for students intending to travel outside of Canada during their studies?*

5. Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP):

- *If applicable, does the institution provide information on the eligibility criteria and application processes for the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP)?*

- *What resources are available for students seeking to work in Canada after completing their studies?*

6. Immigration Workshops and Information Sessions:
- *Are workshops or information sessions conducted to inform international students about Canadian immigration policies, rules, and updates?*
- *How frequently are these sessions held, and what are the participation requirements for students?*

7. Integration with Academic advising:
- *How does the international department collaborate with academic services to streamline processes related to study permits and immigration matters?*

8. Emergency Immigration Support:
- *In the event of urgent immigration matters or unforeseeable circumstances, what support services are accessible to students?*
- *Is there a designated contact person or office for emergency immigration support?*

9. Connection to Legal Resources:
- *Does the institution provide information on legal resources available to international students, including legal advice and services to address immigration concerns?*
- *Are there partnerships with legal professionals who specialize in immigration law?*

10. Orientation Programs:
- *How is information about immigration processes integrated into orientation programs for new international students?*
- *Are there any particular resources or materials provided to assist students in navigating IRCC regulations and other settlement matters at arrival?*

11. Updates on Immigration Policies:
- *How does the institution keep students informed about changes or updates in Canadian immigration policies that may impact them during their studies?*
- *Are there regular communication channels or newsletters dedicated to immigration-related updates?*

12. Support for Family Members:
- *What immigration support services are accessible for family members accompanying international students?*
- *Could you provide guidance on the process for acquiring study permits or visas for dependents?*

Foundational and Advanced Immigration Support

To achieve consistent and essential support for international students ability to study and potentially work in Canada the following are the essential aspects of immigration and settlement supports need to be made available to international students in Canada. By providing comprehensive immigration and settlement support, international departments in Canadian educational institutions contribute significantly to enhancing the overall experience for international students. This support allows students to focus on their academic pursuits while meeting the necessary legal requirements to thrive in Canada.

Study Permit Advising and Support:

- International offices providing support and programs to international students (or equivalent) are pivotal in guiding international students through the study permit application process. This involves offering detailed information on the requirements, eligibility criteria, and necessary documentation for obtaining a study permit, which is crucial for international students studying in Canada.

Documentation Guidance:

- The international department assists students in meticulously preparing and organizing the documentation required for study permit applications, study permit extensions, co-op work permits, and postgraduate work permit applications. This includes ensuring that all students are aware of the required documentation as per IRCC regulations. This support helps streamline the application process and minimizes the likelihood of delays or issues.

Immigration Compliance:

- The department provides comprehensive information on maintaining legal status in Canada. This involves educating students about study permit conditions, guiding them on visa extensions when necessary, and offering assistance with any other immigration-related matters. This ensures that students remain in compliance with Canadian immigration laws throughout their academic journey. Many international portfolios are responsible for compliance reporting.

General Visa Support:

- International Offices facilitate visa-related processes, including temporary resident visas (TRVs), electronic travel authorizations (eTAs), and other relevant travel documents. This service simplifies the bureaucratic aspects of international travel for students, allowing them to focus on their academic pursuits.

Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) advising, including escalated support to alumni:

- The international department provides crucial information on the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP). This includes eligibility criteria and guidance on the application process, enabling eligible graduates to seamlessly transition to the workforce in Canada after completing their studies.

Immigration Workshops:

- Workshops and information sessions are organized to educate international students about IRCC regulations and updates. These sessions may cover topics such as study and work regulations, helping students navigate the intricacies of the immigration landscape.

Integration with Academic Services:

- The department collaborates closely with faculties and other student advising services, such as academic advising, to ensure a smooth integration of immigration processes with academic services. This collaborative effort aims to streamline administrative procedures related to study permits, allowing students to concentrate on their studies without unnecessary bureaucratic challenges.

Emergency Immigration Support:

- In cases of urgent immigration matters, such as visa issues or unexpected changes in immigration status, International offices provides holistic and administrative assistance. This emergency support ensures that students receive timely guidance and solutions to address

critical immigration-related issues. Including stakeholder engagement with IRCC representatives and Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA).

Connection to Legal Resources:

- The international department informs students about the legal resources available to them. This includes providing information on legal services that can address escalated immigration concerns outside of the scope of student, ensuring that students have access to professional support when needed.

Orientation Programs:

- Immigration processes are incorporated into orientation programs organized collaboratively with the international office and other student services. This ensures that international students are well-informed about the Canadian immigration system from the moment they arrive, setting a positive tone for their academic journey.

Updates on Immigration Policies:

- The department keeps international students informed about any changes or updates in Canadian immigration policies that may impact them during their studies. Regular communication ensures that students are aware of the latest developments and can make informed decisions regarding their immigration status.

Foundational and Advanced Settlement Support

Health Insurance:

- **Guidance on Coverage:** Providing information on the B.C. healthcare system and assisting students in understanding and obtaining the necessary health insurance coverage, such as the B.C. Medical Services Plan (MSP) health plan or private health insurance.
- **Access to Healthcare Services:** Offering information on how to access healthcare services in B.C., including details on local clinics, hospitals, and emergency services. Ensure student is aware of 8-1-1, 9-1-1, 9-8-8 and the purpose behind each.
- **Liaising with Health Care Professionals and Stakeholders:** Working with student union and other community stakeholders to ensure health insurance and extended health support is provided.

Cultural Transition:

- **Cultural Orientation Programs:** Organizing programs or workshops to help international students understand Canadian culture, social norms, and customs.
- **Language Support:** Supporting resources on campus that offer language resources and support to enhance communication skills, especially for non-native English or French speakers.
- **Social Integration Events:** Arranging events and activities that foster social connections, allowing international students to build friendships and networks within the local community. To foster social connections, create a platform and environment for international students to connect with each other and with local students.
- **Cultural Events:** Celebrating culturally-relevant events that help students develop community and integrate into the broader community and enrich their cultural awareness.

- **Peer Mentorship Programs**: Implementing peer mentorship programs pairs incoming international students with experienced students who can provide guidance on cultural adaptation, academic life, and social aspects. This mentorship facilitates a smoother transition and creates a supportive network for international students.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** The international department may offer cultural competency training to faculty and staff to enhance their understanding of the challenges faced by international students. This training contributes to creating a more inclusive and culturally aware campus environment. Recognizing the potential challenges of cultural adjustment, the international department works closes with health services to ensure that resources that are culturally sensitive and address the unique needs of international students.

Accommodation Support:

- **Housing Assistance:** Working with campus partners to provide guidance on finding accommodation, whether on-campus or off-campus and assisting with any housing-related concerns. Collaborating with Student Union to address landlord / tenant issues
- **Temporary Accommodation:** Offering support in securing temporary housing for the initial period upon arrival.

Legal Information and Rights:

- **Legal Workshops:** Conduct workshops to inform students about their legal rights and responsibilities within the Canadian and provincial legal framework, including tenancy laws and employment regulations.

Financial Guidance:

- **Budgeting Assistance:** Offering advice on financial management, including budgeting for living expenses, tuition fees, and any unexpected costs.
- **Banking Information:** Providing information on opening bank accounts, understanding Canadian currency, and managing financial transactions.

Cell Phone

- Obtaining a cell phone is one of the first steps needed to be undertaken by international students. Canadian cell phone providers and plans can be difficult to navigate. Institutions should provide hints and tips on what the student should consider prior to purchasing or signing up for a cell phone plan or contract.

Examples of workshops and advising sessions

Permanent Residency Programs:

Host representatives from the provincial and federal governments to provide immigration updates for students. For example, representatives from the BC PNP programs speak to students about their program, while IRCC representatives outline some of the changes to their programs as well.

- Canadian Experience Class
- Federal Skilled Worker

- Provincial Nominee Programs and
- Family class immigration options

International departments host permanent residence information sessions in conjunction facilitated by internal or external RCIC. The sessions provide updates on various programs that would be of interest to international students who are looking to remain in Canada permanently.

Get a Social Insurance Number (SIN):

Service Canada agents visit campus early in Term 1 and Term 2 to provide SINs for eligible new students. Students could get their SINs on campus without having to travel to Service Canada office or apply online.

- Institutions work with Service Canada or the Community Policing Anti-Fraud Unit to talk to students about preventing scams and fraud. The presentation includes how students can spot potential risks and when and how to report instances of scams and fraud.

"In house" – Immigration Sessions:

Sessions can include, Post Graduate Work Permit (PGWP) (specialized for undergraduate, graduate, and accelerated programs), Co-op work permit session, Study permit extension, How to Invite Friends and Family to Canada

Tax filing for International Students

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is present in the tax filing system in Canada. Students have an opportunity to ask questions and to find out more about tax credits, tax agreements and the tax process in Canada.

Applying for a Post-Graduation Work Permit

PGWP sessions for students in their final year or terms of study. Advisors outline application processes, recent changes to the PGWP, and how and when student should submit their applications. Specialized immigration sessions. Advisors also facilitate specialized immigration sessions for specialized groups such as accelerated learning programs.

Co-op Work Permit

Students received information about applying for the work permit, as well as a hands-on tutorial about applying for the document.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities

Ongoing requirements for continuing professional development and staying up to date on changes to the immigration system that will impact international students.

Examples of PD workshops include:

- Work On and Off-Campus: International Students
- Work Permits and International Students: Co-Ops, Spouses and Post-Graduation
- Immigration Policy and Law in Practice

1. **RCIC - Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant:**
    - **Definition:** An RCIC is a professional who is authorized to provide immigration advice and services in Canada. They play a crucial role in assisting individuals and families with the immigration process, helping them navigate the complex legal requirements.
    - **Regulatory Body:** The Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC) is the designated regulatory authority for RCICs. ICCRC is responsible for overseeing the conduct and professional standards of immigration consultants in Canada.
    - **Requirements for Becoming an RCIC:**
        - Education: Completion of an accredited immigration consultant program from a recognized institution.
        - Experience: Demonstrating a certain amount of professional experience in the field of immigration.
        - Examination: Passing the Entry-to-Practice Exam (EPE) administered by ICCRC.
        - Membership: Once qualified, individuals become members of ICCRC and are subject to its regulations and ethical standards.
    - **Code of Professional Conduct:** RCICs are bound by a strict code of professional conduct, which includes ethical guidelines, client confidentiality, and maintaining the highest standards of integrity in their practice.
    - **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** To maintain their status as RCICs, individuals are required to participate in ongoing CPD activities. This ensures that consultants stay updated on changes in immigration laws, policies, and best practices.
2. **RISIA - Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor:**
    - Complete the International Students and Immigration Education Program (ISIEP) offered by the **Canadian** Bureau for International Education.
    - **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** To maintain their status as RISIAs, individuals are required to participate in ongoing CPD activities as it pertains to the student scope. This ensures that consultants stay updated on changes in immigration laws, policies, and best practices.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

Vancouver Community College (VCC): Vancouver Community College provides comprehensive immigration and settlement support through detailed website content, and virtual and in-person advising

Capilano University (CapU): Capilano University provides immigration advising through online, telephone or in-person drop-in sessions. Their Permits and Visa webpage also includes comprehensive information about the immigration documents required to study and if students plan to work while at work at CapU.

Simon Fraser University (SFU): Simon Fraser University provides comprehensive immigration and settlement support. Through the International Student Advising and Programs' webpage students can

access instruction guides that are thorough and up to date. The International Services for Students Office at Simon Fraser University (SFU) also provides holistic support to international students including one on one advising, events, and student programs.

University of Alberta: University of Alberta's International Student and Visitor Services provides extensive immigration and settlement supports for international students including an online interactive portal supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI), 'I-Advise', an immigration Notice and Updates page, monthly immigration webinars, monthly in-person workshops, and extensive website content for a variety of immigration related topics.

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Arrival, Orientation and Transition

International students must navigate many essential processes and steps before they even begin their studies. Post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to support students as they navigate their arrival to Canada, transition into the institution, adjust to new environments and create a new life for themselves on and off campus. Institutions have an important role to play in supporting students' transitions. Arrival, Orientation and Transition (AOT) programs should be more than single day events, they need to help students develop a compass to navigate their way and offer a 'guiding light' to help students overcome obstacles and thrive in their new academic and cultural environment' (Cheng, 2023). These programs help students create stability and develop pathways, bringing into their lives what helps them feel grounded and able to learn. They can also play a key role in helping students to build community and connect with the supports designed to help them thrive at the institution. The AOT programs should link into the longer-term settlement requirements for students to help them meet their foundational needs required to build a robust academic and personal experience. AOT programs also have a role to play in helping students to scaffold into their academic programs, curriculum engagement and classroom experiences.

Often the arrival, orientation and transition needs of international students are supported through the International Student support centres in collaboration with the broader institution Orientation programs. Effective collaborations and relationships between units across campus are essential to ensuring smooth programs and seamless experiences for international students. Students do not regard the institution in separate units, supports and resources across campus need to make collaborative effort to work together to create an institution wide approach that enhances the student experience.

Orientation programs play a pivotal role in the success and institutional retention of international students. These programs have been found to significantly impact student performance and participation in the initial months of the first semester (both first year and new to institution), thereby influencing long-term retention (Benavides & Keyes, 2016). Furthermore, research has indicated that orientation programs are considered useful retention tactics, with recommendations for institutions to provide support services such as orientations to increase student satisfaction and ultimately retention (Hullinger & Hogan, 2014). The importance of cultural orientation programs for international student adjustment and retention has been emphasized, highlighting the need for specialized programs to support the unique needs of international students. The literature and key approaches to student support the role of orientation programs is continuously emphasized, in not only facilitating the initial adjustment of international students but also in contributing to their long-term success and retention within the institution.

Description

The first six to eight weeks after a student arrives are crucial to help the student have a smooth transition and begin to thrive in their new country and school. Institutions must be careful to give timely information in digestible ways for students and spread out information or repeat and re-visit information along the way. How much information is shared here will also depend on the pre-arrival engagement that students have been offered and participated in. Having some overlap in the content helps deepen understanding, but institutions will need to ensure the information does not become too repetitive. Breaking down the engagement in the first six to eight weeks allows institutions to monitor the content, reduce repetition while scaffolding content to build and deepen awareness and understanding. This approach will help students build confidence in their ability to navigate their new environments while making connections with campus resources, student supports, peers and student groups.

1. **Arrival programs:** First contact leading to the orientation programs.
2. **Orientation programs:** Between the arrival programs and the start of classes.
3. **Transition programs:** Continue up to the first eight weeks of students' arrival and beyond.

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Tailor arrival, orientation and transition supports to meet the diverse needs of international students.
- **Equity:** Ensure equal access to resources and opportunities.
- **Holistic Approach:** Support Eco-system; Academic, cultural, familial, social and physical and mental health and well being.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Recognize and respect cultural differences and provide culturally appropriate support.
- **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships across campus departments, units, services and programs to enhance support services.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Regularly assess and refine support programs based on feedback and emerging needs.
- **Accountability:** Fostering clarity about institutional responsibilities. Welcoming, orientation and helping students transition into their new environments are cross-institutional responsibilities.

Facilitating effective programs require clear leadership and organization however, the entire campus community plays a role in the transitions and success of students.

- **Ethical and proactive approach:** Understanding the barriers that students face in trying to engage and succeed at institutions helps to create a proactive approach to effective AOT programs and supportive learning environments. Institutions have an ethical responsibility in playing a proactive and active role in students' success.
- **Fostering a sense of belonging:** Right from the initial contact with students is crucial to their success: Arrival and orientation programs play a crucial role in building a sense of belonging.

Questions

1. *What resources and strategies are in place to support international students' transition into the institution?*
2. *Is there a collaborative approach to facilitating AOT with partners across campus?*
3. *How does the institution support students arriving in Canada (outside of immigration support)?*
4. *What settlement supports and resources are in place?*
5. *How does the institution help students connect with communities and resources on and off campus?*
6. *How does the institution incorporate opportunities for peer-to-peer connections within the AOT programs and events?*
7. *How is information scaffolded to ensure effective timing and less overwhelm?*

Foundational and Advanced Support

Arrival (Welcome):

Engaging with students as soon as possible after they arrive in their new environment can reduce student's anxiety and sends a reassuring message of support and care. Arrival programs can include:

- Airport Greetings and /or transportation
- Programs and Activities to help students navigate a new location/city and environment:
    - Opportunities to experience and learn about public transportation and places to get the goods and services needed to help students settle into their new environment. These activities help students familiarize themselves with the local area, including public transportation, shopping, dining, and cultural sites and develop the confidence to explore their new surroundings and integrate with the local community.
    - Institutions can organize bus trips, social gatherings, on-campus residence activities, and shopping trips.

Orientation:

After the arrival programs students can start to orient themselves to the institution, their campus lives and their experiences in the classroom. Attending orientation sessions helps students familiarize themselves with campus culture and resources, academic expectations, support services, and connects them with peers and other students. Orientation programs specifically tailored to international students are crucial to help students make the connection with campus resources and facilities, academic

resources, student support services, and Canadian culture. Orientation events and activities can facilitate interaction between international and domestic students, encourage intercultural connections and foster a sense of community. Institutions can play a role in helping students experience a sense of belonging by supporting student transitions into the institutions and providing opportunities for connections.

a) Learning outcomes for orientation programming (general)

The learning outcomes listed below give an overview of topics that should be included in orientation programs. Depending on the size and scale of the student populations – both the overall population and international students- the learning outcomes must be adjusted to support specific student groups, programs and levels of study and address the critical aspects of relevance. While the list below contains broad and general outcomes, it also provides key elements to ensure that students gain critical awareness and skills necessary for their successful engagement within the academic and social community at their institutions and local communities. These learning outcomes are a starting point and by no means exhaustive.

- **Understanding of Immigration Rules and Student Responsibilities**
    - Students will be able to interpret visa regulations and study permit conditions relevant to their status.
    - Students will recognize the importance of complying with immigration laws and the consequences of non-compliance.
- **Academic Expectations and Integrity**
    - Students will identify the core values and expectations of the academic community regarding academic integrity and ethical conduct.
    - Students will understand the resources available to support their academic work, including citation standards and avoiding plagiarism.
- **Campus Resource Utilization**
    - Students will become familiar with the range of campus resources, including academic advising, libraries, tutoring centers, and counseling services.
    - Students will learn how to access and use these resources effectively to support their educational goals.
- **Social and Cultural Engagement**
    - Students will acquire knowledge of the social and cultural norms of the host country, enhancing their intercultural communication skills.
    - Students will demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of culture shock and strategies for successful cultural adaptation.
    - Provide students with opportunities to connect with peers and develop friendships.
- **Financial Management Skills**
    - Students will understand the fundamentals of budgeting, financial planning, and the cost of living in the host country.
    - Students will recognize the processes for paying tuition and managing personal finances, including banking, scholarships, and employment regulations.
- **Health and Wellness Awareness**
    - Students will understand how to access and navigate the healthcare system, including health insurance policies, mental health services, and emergency care.

    - Students will identify strategies for maintaining mental and physical health while studying abroad, including engagement in physical activities and stress management techniques.
- **Housing Knowledge and Tenant Rights**
    - Students will gain insight into various housing options and what to consider when choosing accommodation.
    - Students will be informed about their rights and responsibilities as tenants, including how to address housing issues responsibly.
- **Personal Safety and Security**
    - Students will understand how to maintain personal safety and security on and off-campus and be aware of the resources available to them, such as campus security.
    - Students will become familiar with emergency procedures, including evacuation routes and emergency contact numbers.
- **Communication and Language Proficiency**
    - Students will develop an awareness of language support services and programs to enhance their proficiency in the language of instruction.
    - Students will recognize the importance of effective communication in an academic setting and the resources available to support language development.
- **Professional and Career Development**
    - Students will be introduced to career services and learn the importance of gaining professional experience through internships, volunteer work, and on-campus employment.
    - Students will explore skill development opportunities that will benefit their future career paths.
- **Campus Involvement and Leadership**
    - Students will learn about extracurricular activities, student organizations, and leadership opportunities that can enrich their university experience.
    - Students will understand the benefits of active participation in campus life for personal growth and community engagement.
- **Spiritual Opportunities**
    - Provide information regarding faith or spiritual opportunities either at the institution or in the community as part of the orientation.

b) Core Information Sessions (Legal, Immigration, Healthcare)

Immigration, Healthcare and Legal Matters

Summary: Navigating immigration and legal requirements is a critical step for international students to ensure they remain in status and with proper healthcare coverage during their time in Canada and British Columbia. Proper understanding and management of these regulations are essential for maintaining student status, access to education, employment, and healthcare.

Key Issues to Address:

1. **Study Permits and Visas:**
    - Understanding different visa types and requirements
    - Keeping track of expiration dates and renewal procedures
2. **Work Permits and Employment Rights:**
    - Clarifying on- and off-campus work privileges
    - Knowing how to comply with work restrictions and limits

3. **Healthcare Access:**
    - Arranging health insurance coverage
    - Identifying available healthcare services and how to access them
4. **Fulfilling Legal Obligations:**
    - Understanding academic and employment legal responsibilities
    - Avoiding violations that could affect immigration status

Academic Information

Summary: Academic success is the primary goal of the student journey, and clarity on academic information facilitates this success. Knowledge of programs, registration processes, and available resources prepares students for the academic demands and opportunities of higher education.

Key Issues to Address:

1. **Understanding Academic Programs:**
    - Aligning career goals with program choices
    - Seeking academic advice and support services
2. **Course Selection and Registration:**
    - Navigating course prerequisites and registration systems
    - Managing course loads and schedules
3. **Utilizing Academic Resources:**
    - Maximizing library and research facilities
    - Taking advantage of learning centers and academic workshops

Campus Facilities and Services

Summary: Campus facilities and services significantly enrich the college experience by providing essential needs and enhancing the quality of student life. Familiarity with these services allows students to fully engage with and benefit from the institution.

Key Issues to Address:

1. **Accessing Libraries and Computer Labs:**
    - Leveraging academic and technological resources
    - Understanding resource lending policies and technology access
2. **Understanding Student Center and Health Facilities:**
    - Participating in student life and support groups
    - Using health facilities and recognizing the importance of wellness
3. **Exploring Dining and Sports Facilities:**
    - Navigating dining plans and identifying healthy food options
    - Engaging in physical activities and campus recreational programs

Financial Matters

Summary: Financial management is a critical aspect that impacts a student's ability to sustain their academic journey. Knowledge of tuition fees, available financial aid, and budgeting strategies is fundamental to ensure financial well-being.

Key Issues to Address:

1. **Understanding Tuition and Fees:**

- Breaking down costs and understanding billing cycles
- Meeting payment deadlines to avoid penalties

2. **Navigating Scholarships and Bursaries:**
   - Finding and applying for available financial aid
   - Comprehending eligibility for awards and maintaining them
3. **Banking:**
   - Opening and managing a bank account in Canada
4. **Developing a Student Budget:**
   - Creating and sticking to a realistic budget
   - Planning for unforeseen expenses and emergencies

Safety and Security

Summary: Personal safety and security are paramount for students as they navigate campus life. Awareness of security measures, emergency procedures, and protective resources instills confidence and contributes to a secure learning environment.

Key Issues to Address:

1. **Campus Security Measures:**
   - Becoming acquainted with campus security personnel and services
   - Utilizing safety apps and emergency contact numbers
2. **Emergency Procedures:**
   - Knowing the emergency response plan, alarms, and exits
   - Practicing drills and understanding campus-wide alerts
3. **Personal Safety Tips:**
   - Staying safe during late hours on and off-campus
   - Securing personal property against theft or loss
4. **Support and Counselling Services:**
   - Identifying mental health and support resources
   - Utilizing confidential counselling and support networks in times of need

c) Orientation Planning Process

Setting Objectives for Orientation:

- Clearly articulate the goals to successfully onboard international students.
- Ensure objectives aim to create an inclusive atmosphere that fosters community integration.
- Establish learning outcomes, such as understanding the academic system and knowing where to find support services.

Forming a Planning Committee:

- Assemble a team that reflects the diversity of the campus community, pulling from staff, faculty, and current students.
- Ensure representation from key service areas that interact with international students.
- Plan for regular meetings to facilitate communication and coordination among committee members.

Conducting a Needs Assessment:

- Gather data regarding their academic preparedness, language proficiency, and cultural adjustment concerns.

- Opportunity to use existing structures in place (recruitment, current students etc.).
- Use direct feedback tools such as surveys or interviews to understand the incoming students' expectations and anxieties.
- Gather data regarding their academic preparedness, language proficiency, and cultural adjustment concerns.
- Analyze the information to identify common trends and unique challenges faced by the incoming cohort.
- Debrief with current students or students who have just completed their orientation, host a "what I wish I would have known session" to garner further insight.

Developing a Comprehensive Schedule:

- Craft an itinerary that balances informative sessions with interactive and social engagements.
- Organize activities that are specifically designed to address identified needs from the assessment.
- Allocate appropriate durations for each activity, providing enough time to cover necessary content without overwhelming the students.
- Embed social and rest breaks to encourage informal networking and prevent fatigue.

Additional Detailed Planning Considerations:

- Anticipate challenges such as language barriers, jet lag, and cultural shock in the orientation schedule.
- Schedule sessions on important topics such as health and safety regulations, public transport, navigating immigration requirements, and financial management.
- Plan for multiple events in one week to build opportunities for students to make connections and build relationships.
- Integrate ice-breaking activities to promote peer connections and cultural exchanges. Ensure activities are consistently adapted and vetted, based on feedback from students.
- Include campus tours with emphasis on essential services such as libraries, health centers, dining facilities, and student unions.
- ***Ensure that all programming is inclusive and respectful of the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of the students.***

Transition Programs

After the initial orientation program students need time to transition into a new environment, navigate cultural shifts and changes, make friends, and understand the local lifestyle are critical aspects. Institutions have opportunities in the first 6-8 weeks of student experiences to create climates that foster connections and sense of belonging. Typically, these connections can be made through mentorship programs, conversation partners programs and networking opportunities with campus ambassadors. These kinds of programs will be discussed in more depth in the Social Programs section, but the connections can start and students can begin their engagement in the AOT programs.

a) Peer Mentors, Introductions and Networking

Peer Mentorship: Introduce incoming international students to current student ambassadors or peer mentors who can share their experiences and provide support throughout the orientation and beyond.

1. **Objective of Peer Mentorship**:
    - To facilitate the transition of international students into their new academic and cultural environment through guidance and support.
2. **Selection of Student Ambassadors or Peer Mentors**:
    - Ambassadors are often selected based on their leadership qualities, communication skills, and willingness to help others.
        - They should ideally have some commonalities with the incoming students, such as language or country of origin, to ease communication.
        - Training is provided to equip them with knowledge about campus resources, cultural sensitivity, and mentoring techniques.
3. **Roles and Responsibilities of Peer Mentors:**
    - Share their own experiences as students to set realistic expectations.
    - Offer insights into academic life including study tips, course selection, and time management.
    - Introduce mentees to social aspects of campus life, such as clubs, activities, and events.
    - Help with practical matters like opening a bank account, navigating public transportation, and shopping for essentials.
    - Serve as a touchstone for understanding cultural nuances and avoiding faux pas.
    - Provide emotional support and a sense of belonging to reduce feelings of homesickness and isolation.
4. **Orientation and Initial Activities:**
    - Peer mentors often meet mentees during orientation, offering tours and attending welcome events together.
    - Initial meetings might include ice-breaking activities to foster a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.
    - Mentors can aid in explaining administrative processes, such as registration, visa status clarification, and health services enrolment.
5. **Ongoing Support:**
    - Establish regular check-in meetings to address ongoing concerns and questions that arise.
    - Create a safe space for mentees to voice challenges they're facing without judgment.
    - Encourage mentees to engage with the campus and local community to broaden their support network.
6. **Outcome and Evaluation:**
    - Peer mentorship aims to increase retention rates, enhance academic success, and promote a positive cultural exchange.
    - Regular feedback from mentees helps to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentors and the program.
    - Success stories and testimonials can be used to promote the program and encourage participation.
7. **Long-Term Benefits:**
    - Mentorship provides a foundation for strong, cross-cultural relationships that can benefit both mentors and mentees in their personal and professional development.

- International students often experience smoother integration into the host country and gain a deeper understanding of the local culture and customs.
- Mentors develop valuable skills such as leadership, empathy, and cross-cultural communication.

Support and Resource Delivery Options

By implementing a diverse range of program delivery supports across various platforms and formats, institutions can create a welcoming and inclusive environment that empowers international students to thrive academically, socially, and culturally.

- **Online Programs:**
  - **Virtual Orientation**: To supplement in-person orientation events and programs, institutions might provide online orientation sessions covering essential information such as immigration procedures, settlement and housing options, academic expectations, and cultural norms, accessible to international students before their arrival.
  - **Online Language Courses**: Providing virtual language courses and language exchange platforms to help international students improve their English proficiency or learn the host country's language remotely.
  - **Virtual Peer Mentoring**: Facilitating virtual peer mentoring programs where incoming international students are paired with current students or alumni for guidance and support, fostering connections and easing the transition process.
- **Social Media Campaigns**:
  - **Social Media Orientation Guides**: Launching social media campaigns featuring orientation guides, Q&A sessions, and virtual campus tours to engage international students and provide them with valuable information and resources.
  - **Cultural Awareness Campaigns**: Running social media campaigns promoting cultural awareness and inclusivity, highlighting cultural events, traditions, and resources available to support international students' cultural adaptation.
- **In-Person Sessions:**
  - **In-Person Arrival Assistance**: Providing in-person assistance and support services upon international students' arrival, including airport pickups, welcome receptions, and orientation sessions tailored to their specific needs and concerns.
  - **In-Person Workshops and Events**: Organizing in-person workshops, seminars, and social events throughout the academic year to facilitate face-to-face interactions, networking opportunities, and cultural exchange among international students and the broader campus community.
- **Faculty-Led Programs:**
  - **Faculty-Led Academic Support**: Engaging faculty members to lead academic support programs such as tutoring sessions, study groups, and academic advising tailored to the unique challenges and academic goals of international students.
  - **Faculty-Led Orientations**: Collaborating with faculty to design academic discipline specific orientation events. These are opportunities for international students to get to know their peers, instructors and Faculty administration.

- **Additional Supports:**
  - **Peer Support Networks**: Establishing peer support networks and international student associations to provide ongoing support, social connections, and advocacy for international students within the campus community.
  - **Health and Wellness Workshops**: Offering health and wellness workshops, counseling services, and support groups specifically designed to address the mental health and well-being needs of international students, promoting holistic wellness and resilience.
  - **Intercultural Acumen Training for Faculty and Staff**: Providing intercultural training programs for faculty and staff members to enhance their cultural competency, awareness and humility and support international students effectively in academic and non-academic settings.
  - **Indigenous Acumen Training for Students**: In collaboration with Indigenous colleagues and communities, create opportunities for international students to learn more about Indigenous cultures, traditions and knowledge while learning more about Canada's history of colonization.

External Resources

1. **Community Settlement Agencies**:
   - Connect with community settlement agencies specializing in assisting newcomers, providing services such as housing assistance, language classes, job placement support, and cultural orientation programs to help international students integrate into the local and diaspora communities and navigate life in their new environment.
2. **Law Enforcement Liaisons**:
   - Access resources and support from law enforcement liaisons who work closely with international students to address safety concerns, provide information on local laws and regulations, offer crime prevention tips, and facilitate communication between law enforcement agencies and the international student population. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the liaisons understand and are sensitive to the varying ways that international students might perceive law enforcement. For some cultures and countries, engaging with law enforcement can be perceived as intimidating or frightening for international students due to differences in law enforcement practices or previous negative experiences
3. **Cultural and Region-Specific Community Partners**:
   - Collaborate with cultural and region-specific community partners who offer cultural events, language exchange programs, and support networks tailored to the needs and interests of international students from specific countries or regions, fostering a sense of belonging and providing opportunities for cultural connection and enrichment.
4. **Local Goods and Service Providers**:
   - Explore a directory of local goods and service providers, including food outlets, grocery stores, community recreation centers, and other essential amenities, to help international students access basic necessities, explore leisure activities, and become familiar with the local community resources available to them.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

1. **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU):** Kwantlen Polytechnic University provides comprehensive AOT supports for international students. These include a family orientation, mandatory online orientation course, mandatory live virtual orientation, in-person orientation event, and a first year festival. In addition, international students can participate in the KPU Collective which is a blended (online and on campus) community to help students navigate new information and guidance from mentors during their first semester.

2. **British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT):** British Columbia Institute of Technology provides a multi-layered approach to orientation for international students. Their orientation and transition offerings include international student guides and checklists, online orientation workshop series, student success videos and in-person orientation event.

3. **University of British Columbia (UBC):** University of British Columbia offers AOT supports for students on both Vancouver and Okanagan campuses. In Vancouver, these include Imagine UBC, an in-person event for new students to meet peers and faculty, Jump Start, multi-day program ($75 fee), and international student orientation sessions. For UBC-O, there are a suite of orientation events through their Weeks of Welcome program, including the Create event, UBC 101 online program.

4. **University of Windsor**: University of Windsor provides robust international arrivals and orientation support through website content and guides, Soft-landing program, international student orientation – in-person and virtual and a 6-week suitcase to backpack virtual program.

Examples of Post Secondary Institution Orientation Checklists:

- **University of Windsor:**

  https://www.uwindsor.ca/international-student-centre/sites/uwindsor.ca.international-student-centre/files/to-do_checklist_for_new_international_students_f_2023.pdf

- **Dalhousie University:**

  https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/international-centre/inbound_exchange/new-student-checklist.html

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Transition Through

Intercultural Engagement

Developing and fostering intercultural engagement is often seen as a way to build bridges between communities, enhance cooperation, and create a more inclusive and harmonious society. It plays a significant role in the increasingly interconnected globalized world. In a recent study conducted globally, Deardorff and Arasatanam-Smith (2017) found that while higher education institutions may have traditionally relied on student exchange and mobility programs as a key way to develop such intercultural skills, increasingly such skills are being developed through the curriculum, both formal and informal. For example, the University of British Columbia developed an intercultural development program to bridge diverse groups on campus with the goal of developing intercultural skills for participants. The program included a series of workshops, an experiential learning component (to practice their skills in real-world contexts), and a community of practice" (Ripmeester et al. 2019, pg. 213).

Description

Intercultural engagement refers to the process of interaction and connection between individuals or groups from diverse cultural backgrounds and across intersectionality. Intersectionality is a framework developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw for understanding how various social categories such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability, and other aspects of identity intersect and overlap, creating unique and interconnected systems of privilege and oppression.

The framework is critical to the institutional development of intercultural engagement.

Intercultural engagement is critical for fostering interaction and understanding among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, including international and domestic students. This engagement is especially relevant in educational settings where students from varying countries and cultural contexts converge.

Intercultural engagement also involves the exchange of ideas, customs, values, and perspectives. Effective intercultural engagement requires an open-minded approach, cultural sensitivity, and a willingness to understand and appreciate differences.

Guiding Principles

Key principles of intercultural engagement may include:

- **Communication:** Effective communication across cultural boundaries and intersectionality is crucial. This involves language and an understanding of cultural nuances in communication styles, non-verbal cues, and expression.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Being aware of one's own cultural biases and having an understanding of the customs, traditions, and values of others is essential for successful intercultural engagement.
- **Respect:** Respect for diverse perspectives and recognizing the value that different cultures bring to the table are fundamental to fostering positive intercultural relationships.

- **Adaptability:** Being adaptable and flexible in one's approach to various cultural contexts helps navigate differences and find common ground.
- **Empathy:** The ability to empathize with individuals from different cultural backgrounds fosters a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Intercultural engagement may sometimes lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. Developing skills for resolving conflicts culturally sensitive is important for maintaining positive relationships.

Questions

1. **Intercultural Communication:**
   - *How can staff members ensure effective communication across cultural boundaries, considering language barriers and cultural nuances in communication styles?*
   - *What strategies can staff members employ to enhance their understanding of non-verbal cues and expressions in cross-cultural interactions?*
   - *How can intersectionality be built into programs to recognize and address the ways in which racism intersects with other forms of oppression, such as sexism, homophobia, ableism, and classism?*
   - *How can staff members encourage active listening and seek clarification when communicating with individuals from different cultural backgrounds?*

2. **Cultural Awareness:**
   - *How can staff members become more aware of their own cultural biases and assumptions that may impact their interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds?*
   - *What resources or training opportunities are available for staff members to increase their understanding of the customs, traditions, and values of different cultures represented among international students?*
   - *How can staff members facilitate cross-cultural learning and exchange among international students to promote cultural awareness and understanding within the campus community?*

3. **Respect and Reciprocity:**
   - How can staff members demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives and cultural differences in their interactions with international students?
   - What steps can staff members take to create an inclusive environment where international students feel valued and respected for their cultural identities and contributions?
   - How can staff members address and challenge stereotypes or biases that may undermine respect for different cultures within the campus community?

4. **Adaptability:**
   - What strategies can staff members use to adapt and be flexible in their approach when interacting with international students from diverse cultural contexts?
   - How can staff members navigate cultural differences and find common ground with international students while respecting their unique cultural backgrounds?
   - In what ways can staff members support international students in adapting to the Canadian academic and social environment while preserving their cultural identity?

5. **Building Empathy and Compassion:**

- How can staff members develop empathy towards the experiences and perspectives of international students from different cultural backgrounds?
- What approaches can staff members use to actively listen to international students' stories, challenges, and aspirations, and empathize with their cultural experiences?
- How can staff members incorporate empathy into their support services and interactions with international students to build trust and rapport?

6. **Conflict Resolution:**
    - What strategies can staff members employ to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings that may arise in intercultural interactions sensitively and effectively?
    - How can staff members facilitate open dialogue and constructive communication to address cultural differences and resolve conflicts collaboratively?

Foundational and Advanced Support

To build and foster an intercultural campus community in which intercultural engagement can take place among students, staff and faculty, we need to explore the programs and initiatives that embed the guiding principles:

Cultural Exchange:

- Intercultural engagement provides opportunities for international students to share their own culture, traditions, and perspectives with domestic students, fostering a greater appreciation for diversity.
- **Networking and Social Integration:** Building relationships with domestic peers helps international students expand their social networks, both within and outside the academic environment, which can benefit personal and professional growth.
- **Cultural Competence:** Creating opportunities for all international and domestic students to interact enhances the cultural competence of all students. Exposure to diverse perspectives promotes a better understanding of global issues and prepares students for a multicultural workplace.
- **Global Awareness:** Intercultural engagement contributes to developing global awareness and a broader worldview among domestic students. This exposure helps break down stereotypes and fosters a more inclusive and open-minded community.
- **Enhanced Learning:** Collaborative projects and discussions involving students from different cultural backgrounds can lead to richer and more comprehensive learning experiences as diverse viewpoints are considered.
- **Preparation for a Globalized World:** In an increasingly interconnected world, working effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds is a valuable skill. Intercultural engagement prepares domestic students for future professional environments that are likely to be culturally diverse.
- **Actioning Inclusivity:** Engaging with international students contributes to a more inclusive campus environment. This inclusivity benefits all students, creating a sense of community that values diversity.

In summary, intercultural engagement benefits international and domestic students, fostering mutual understanding, collaboration, and personal growth. It enriches the educational experience and prepares students for a globalized and interconnected world.

Staff are uniquely positioned to generate and mobilize knowledge that addresses and transforms systems of oppression and helps shape our campus and the broader community in a positive way. However, it is critical to develop programs that foster intercultural engagement without essentializing intercultural as "international."
Drawing on the Intercultural Development Program at the Global Engagement Office at the University of British Columbia as an example, here are broad goals and objectives international departments can explore:

- **Goal 1:** Develop and Foster intercultural understanding where difference is respected and values of dignity, mutual respect, and justice are enacted.
- **Goal 2:** Facilitate and promote learning about culture and diversity on campus and in the community.
- **Objective 1:** To create a third space for both subjectivity and objectivity where intercultural fluency is fostered and intercultural exchange can take place to reduce presumptions of confrontation, and to avoid essentialist tendencies in intercultural relations.
- **Objective 2:** To expose and address assumptions, biases, contexts, imbalances, injustices, relationships and structures that maintain the privilege of some at the expense of others through workshops and group discussions.
- **Objective 3:** To enhance the capacities of student groups and communities to gain cross-cultural communication skills through practical experience.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

Intercultural engagement have potential to bring together international and domestic students in meaningful ways while fostering intercultural communication on campus and in the broader community. We emphasize the importance of developing intercultural learning outcomes and encouraging relationship-building opportunities. In organizing intercultural initiatives, it is essential to identify learning outcomes that are manageable in scope for assessment.

Approaches to assessing intercultural learning include qualitative analysis observed through critical reflection. Additionally, intercultural learning can be assessed based on observational research methods of performance and participation. Assessment practices can also include indirect measurement tools, participant surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Deardorff (2011) emphasizes the growing importance of intercultural competence within post-secondary education. Many scholars in this field have emphasized the importance of higher education institutions' role in building students' capacities to function more efficiently in an integrated world. This brings intercultural competence and diversity to the fore of what needs to be addressed within student learning" (Deardorff 2011, pg. 65).

What is exactly meant by "intercultural competence" requires examination prior to being able to measure it. Due to this, we highlight that one of the first steps in assessment is understanding exactly what is to be assessed, as mentioned in Deardorff's scholarly work on intercultural competency. Researchers in intercultural development point to specific attitudes, knowledge and skills inherent to intercultural competence. This competence is also an ongoing, iterative process. This requires that assessment of growth in intercultural competence take into account individual reflection and the opportunity to measure change over time. Deardorff states there are "two means by which this can be

done in post-secondary education: though curriculum and through co-curricular activities" as part of a campus internationalization process (Deardorff, 2011, pg. 66).

International institution goals must develop intercultural learning opportunities for all students and create programs that bring together international and domestic students in meaningful ways (Deardorf 2011, pg. 71). This requires having specific intercultural learning outcomes and encouraging relationship-building opportunities. In setting goals and outcomes for learning, it is essential to identify realistic objectives based on the context and select which aspects of learning can be manageable for assessment. The suggested approaches for assessment highlighted by Deardorff include participant portfolios, critical reflection, and observed performance. In addition, indirect measurement tools such as participant surveys, interviews, and focus groups also allow us to assess intercultural development as a continuous learning.

From the field of Student Affairs, Green, Jones and Aloi (2008) emphasize the need for clear assessment practices in more operational terms. "Increasingly, colleges and universities are facing shrinking resources, escalating costs, and growing demands for accountability" (Green et al. 2008, pg. 134). As a result, initiatives within student affairs units are under pressure to demonstrate their worth and importance. Due to this, the purpose in establishing clear outcomes and applying assessments to measure those outcomes are twofold:

1. Finding out how students/participants are learning and developing though participation in the programs and providing feedback to participants on their growth, learning and development; and
2. the ability to demonstrate the worth and importance of programming to speak to its quality and effect upon students providing evidence to support funding and resource allocation (Green et al 2008)

Researchers in this area have synthesized an overview of an assessment process:

- Create and articulate student-learning outcomes
- Develop or select assessment measures
- Select assessment participants
- Implement assessment
- Analyse assessment results
- Report assessment results
- Use results to enhance student learning experiences
- Evaluate the assessment process and suggest improvements

In ensuring the assessment practices are held accountable within the praxis of intercultural design and delivery, we have employed the conceptual framework of actual space.
Actionable Space means to take action within a conflicting set of constraints – conflicting in the sense of limited mobility in action taking initiatives (working/studying within) institutions.

Ermine (2007), researcher/ethicist with the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre in Canada, is a Cree from north central Saskatchewan. He developed the concept of 'ethical space', a theoretical space between cultures and worldviews. Ethical space of engagement is a space to develop a framework for dialogue between communities. He claims that "with our ethical standards in mind, we necessarily have

to think about the transgression of those standards by others and how our actions may also infringe or violate the spaces of others."

Ermine's work concentrates on the positioning of Indigenous peoples and Western society, the 'space between' applies in other contexts, such as between newcomers and members of a Western society. Ermine shares our essential personal boundaries, our moral thresholds, and the "sacred space of the ethical" (Ermine 2007, p.196). Similarly, Homi Bhabha's publication entitled "The Locations of Culture," Bhabha uses concepts such as mimicry, interstice, hybridity, and liminality to argue that cultural production is always most productive where it is most ambivalent (Bhabha 2004).

In this space of inquiry, genuine intercultural dialogue (otherwise understood as communication)" resides. "Genuine" communication and the ethical space of engagement, imply the opening of oneself to the full power of what the 'other' is saying. Through this engagement, we can work towards creating realistic and liveable intercultural experiences – that goes beyond individual consciousness.

Therefore, the facilitator of intercultural engagements is responsible for ensuring that ethical engagement spaces are established throughout the practice and implementation of the assessment. It is through this conscious work, that we can measure outcomes effectively and more thoroughly.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

It is crucial to acknowledge that intercultural skills should not be solely attributed to international students, but rather the entire campus community. It is essential to appreciate the significance of diversity in fostering intercultural understanding and actively strive towards developing an inclusive environment where every individual is respected and valued for their cultural identity.

An intercultural campus community can be developed in various ways. International offices may collaborate with student clubs or support faculty work to build intercultural fluency. Additionally, administrative portfolios working in international education, such as exchange and research programs, can collaborate with other areas, such as international student advising or career readiness.

1. **UBC Okanagan:** Through hands-on workshops and practical involvement, UBCO's Intercultural Development Program (IDP) helps domestic and international students build cross-cultural skills and intercultural fluency to better understand the intersections of culture with power, politics, identity, media, art, and other social structures. The IDP includes workshops, social involvement, community-building, and volunteering activities facilitated by experienced staff and student coordinators. This program assists in developing skills to communicate in culturally diverse communities in Canada and abroad. Once students complete the program, they receive a letter of completion to include on their resume. There are three components to the program: Workshops, Social Involvement, Community Building and Volunteering.

   Workshops for students include:
   - Intercultural Conflict Prevention, Resolution, and Transformation
   - Social Identities and Intersectionality
   - Social Injustice and Intercultural Engagement in the Academy
   - Story Circles
   - Place, Space, and Power the Intercultural Encounter

2. **Thompson Rivers University:** The faculty members of Thompson Rivers University (TRU) are committed to teaching, service and scholarship, and work with a diverse range of students, colleagues and community members. As a result, they have a key role in promoting intercultural learning, which is one of the core themes of TRU's mission and is reflected in its institutional learning outcomes. Workshops for students include:
    - Intercultural Conflict Prevention, Resolution, and Transformation
    - Social Identities and Intersectionality
    - Social Injustice and Intercultural Engagement in the Academy
    - Story Circles
    - Place, Space, and Power the Intercultural Encounter
3. **Kwantlen Polytechnic University:** The Global Development Office at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) is committed to promoting global learning experiences and fostering international relationships among students, staff, and faculty. The programs offered encourage global thinking and diversity in the KPU community. KPU's 'Building Global Citizenship' provides three specific areas for intercultural learning:
    - A Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Course
    - Ladder Studies Internationally
    - Inbound Exchange program
4. **Queen's University:** Queen's University's International Centre (QUIC) offers an intercultural training program that can lead to earning an Intercultural Awareness Certificate. The program is designed to build self-awareness, equip people to understand and appreciate differing cultural points of view, and develop intercultural skills and techniques.

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Academic Life

The academic success of international students is paramount to their post-secondary experience. It remains one of the most crucial aspects of their experience and their academic performance can impact their mental health, social engagement, community and career opportunities and life achievements post degree. Their academic performance can also impact their ability to continue in their academic program and life as an international student in Canada.

Research indicates that the academic success of international students is influenced by several factors: (a) language skills and proficiency in English, (b) social engagement, (c) balancing academic responsibilities, work, and social life (c) adaptation to academic environment, (d) familiarity with cultural

norms, and (e) academic performance (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010; Mamiseishvili, 2011). International students can encounter distinct challenges, including language barriers, social adaptability, adapting to new academic environments and styles of teaching, culture shock, and pressure from family to succeed (Li et al., 2010; Sato & Hodge, 2015; Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014). Overall, these potential barriers and considerations indicate the need for specialized academic supports to facilitate academic success in post-secondary education (Wilkinson, 2002).

Academic expectations, classroom management, and approaches to learning and instruction may be unique to international students coming from countries across the globe. Students may encounter a significant difference than what they are used to and have to transition to a new way of engaging in a classroom and with their academic material. For academic supports to be successful they need to foster self-efficacy and confidence within students. Institutions need to ensure that they are not perpetuating a deficit perspective when working with students who do not have English as their first language, they need to foster an asset and equity lens to help students use their skills associated with navigating new cultures and having multilingual abilities.

Research shows institutional engagement beyond the classroom aiding in English language proficiency, social adjustment, and community acceptance contributes to international student self-efficacy and confidence leading to better academic performance and university retention (Telbis et al., 2014). Supports inside and outside the classroom can contribute to international students academic success.

Description

Supporting international students' academic journeys includes creating a learning environment that ensures students have the resources and guidance they need to succeed academically throughout their university experience. This includes a range of programs, services and resources provided to students to enhance their learning experience, academic performance, and overall success in navigating the challenges of higher education and achieving their academic goals. Post secondary student academic experiences include:

- Coursework: Attending classes, lectures, labs, and completing assignments, which might involve adjusting to a different education system and teaching style.
- Classroom experience engaging with peers and instructors.
- Maintaining academic integrity.
- Choosing academic programs and courses that align with their academic and career goals.
- Adapting effective study skills and course management.
- Extracurricular opportunities: Engaging in clubs, sports, volunteer work, or cultural activities to enhance the overall experience and develop a well-rounded profile.

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Tailor academic supports to meet the diverse needs of international students. Institutions need to move away from a deficit lens when providing supports for international students and see multilingualism as an asset.
- **Equity:** Ensure equal access to resources and opportunities. Institutions must determine ways to level the playing field for international students to support them in thriving in their programs and reaching their academic goals.

- **Holistic Approach:** Support Eco-system; Academic, cultural, familial, social and physical and mental health and well-being.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Recognize and respect cultural differences and provide culturally appropriate support. Approach the provision of academic support from a lens of openness and humility, not a western centric perspective. It is essential to adopt a global perspective of education, honouring various approaches to learning and coursework.
- **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships across campus departments, units, services and programs to enhance support services. Demonstrate collaboration with the student by recognizing and acknowledging students' previous learning experiences and styles.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Regularly assess and refine support programs based on feedback and emerging needs.
- **Accountability:** Provide clarity about institutional responsibilities to support academic success.
- **Ethical and proactive approach:** Focus supports on the needs of the students, what will help the student reach their academic goal vs. what is best for the institution.

Questions

1. *What departments / units provide academic support at the institution?*
2. *What resources are in place to help international students understand and comply with academic integrity?*
3. *Are there structures for academic supports delivered in centralized or decentralized formats?*
4. *Are there mechanisms in place to support students experiencing academic challenges before students reach academic crises?*
5. *What resources are in place to support faculty and instructors in developing courses, building curriculum and creating classroom environments conducive to international student learning and academic success?*

Foundational Support

To ensure that international students get the core supports needed to experience academic success the following requirements should be considered:

- **Teaching and instruction support:** International students' academic performances are mainly determined by their experiences in the classroom. Faculty and instructors' decisions about their curriculum design and course content will impact the learning experiences of students (Schuerholz-Lehr, Caws, Van Gyn and Preece, 2007). Providing support for faculty to consider internationalizing their curriculum might include infusing international elements and resources into their content, and offering instructional approaches that are more inclusive of culturally diverse student populations.

- **Writing support:** Provide assistance with writing skills, including help with essays, research papers, and other writing assignments.

- **Academic Integrity:** Provide resources to help international students learn the academic integrity expectations and how to navigate the culturally specific approaches to academic integrity in their institution.

- **Academic Advising:** Ensure academic advisers are knowledgeable about international student experiences and well connected to the international student service office is an important part of providing academic support. International students can benefit from early, frequent and easily accessible academic advising to ensure they are on the right track to meet their academic and career goals. Finding courses and academic programs that fit their aspirations and learning styles early as early as possible can have profound impacts on their academic performance and overall experience:
    - Program and course selection
    - Prerequisites and upgrading options
    - Graduation requirements
    - Academic resources and on-campus support services

- **Library and research support:** Provide assistance with using library resources, learning effective research skills and understanding how to use databases to support coursework and learning.

- **Technology Support:** Provide assistance for students to develop digital skills, and effectively use learning technology, software and platforms.

- **Peer Support:** International students often state that they are more comfortable talking about academic challenges with their peers. Structured peer support programs can be a more accessible way for students to access support from peers that are trained in knowing and understanding the appropriate and available resources on campus.

- **Accessible learning Centres: for students with a disability (ies):** Accessible Learning Centres provide essential support for international students with disabilities, supporting their academic well being by addressing individual needs and promoting inclusive learning environments. Through specialized accommodations such as assistive technology, alternate format materials, and academic coaching, these centers facilitate equal access to educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. By fostering a supportive and barrier-free learning environment, Accessible Learning Centres play a crucial role in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the international student community.

  It is important to communicate to international students that accessible learning centres are not only for those with physical disabilities but also explaining how individuals with learning disabilities or mental health challenges may also benefit.

Advanced Support

- **Individualized learning support (i.e., LS practitioners):** International students may benefit from specialized approaches to learning support including providing learning assistance and strategists that are knowledgeable about international students' academic experiences and can offer culturally appropriate services and support.

- **Learning Skills programs and courses:** Providing workshops, programs and courses focused on students developing a better understanding of themselves as learners and effective learning strategies and study habits (e.g., time management, exam preparation, note-taking and reading strategies.

- **Credit based EAL courses:** Some international students require additional resources for developing English language proficiencies to support their academic coursework and responsibilities. Providing EAL courses for credit will encourage students to take these courses alongside their academic program courses to support their learning and course progression.

- **Specialized tutors programs:** Provide individual or group tutoring services that are accessible and culturally appropriate for international students. This may include providing resources to help students determine the appropriate tutor(s) for their learning styles and specific disciplines.

- **Communication:** Timely communication to international students regarding academic and social supports will help convey valuable information to students to positively support their experience at the institution. Each institution may have different methods and may include e-newsletters, social media posts, or old-fashioned yet effective bulletin boards.

Support and Resource Delivery Options

Learning and Teaching Centres:
Learning and Teaching Centres can operate as a hub for educational innovation, faculty development, and student's learning support. They can offer a range of services and resources aimed at enhancing teaching effectiveness, supporting teaching assistants, and promoting academic success. These may include workshops and seminars on pedagogical best practices, technology integration in the classroom, and assessment strategies. Supports for both the learning and teaching portfolios might include the following:

- Learning:
  - Writing support
  - STEM - Math Centres, Physics help, etc.
  - Learning Strategists
  - Study Centres - learning and study skill courses
  - Specialized tutors
  - Peer academic support
- Teaching and Instruction support:
  - Intercultural awareness
  - Teaching Strategies
  - Curriculum and Assessment Design
  - Advancement of Universal Design (UDL)
  - Professor and instructors' engagement with students
  - Classroom environment
- **English Language Centres:** English Language Centres offer specialized support to international students seeking to improve their English language proficiency. These centers provide language courses, conversation practice sessions, writing workshops, and language proficiency assessments to help students enhance their academic communication skills and succeed in their studies within an English-medium environment.
- **Support for Navigating Academic Technology**: This support service assists international students in familiarizing themselves with academic technologies such as learning management systems (e.g., Brightspace), online course materials, and digital resources. It offers training sessions, tutorials, and

technical assistance to ensure students can effectively navigate these platforms, access course materials, submit assignments, and engage in online discussions to support their academic success.

- **Tutor Programs:** Tutor programs provide one-on-one or small group tutoring sessions to international students seeking additional academic support in specific subjects or courses. Qualified tutors offer personalized assistance, clarification of concepts, problem-solving strategies, and study tips to help students improve their understanding of course materials, enhance their academic performance, and build confidence in their learning abilities.
- **Provision of Library and Research Skill Support:** This support service offers international students guidance and resources to develop essential library and research skills necessary for academic success. It includes workshops, tutorials, and individual consultations on topics such as effective literature searching, citation management, academic integrity, and critical evaluation of sources. Additionally, librarians provide assistance in accessing and utilizing library resources, databases, and scholarly materials to support students in their research endeavors and academic projects.

External Resources

Online Learning Platforms: Online learning platforms such as Coursera, Khan Academy, or edX that offer free or low-cost courses, tutorials, and resources in various subjects to supplement international students' academic learning and provide additional support in areas of interest or need.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC): CMEC works collaboratively with provinces and territories to enhance the quality of education in Canada. While not focused exclusively on learning strategies, CMEC provides insights and resources on educational practices that can contribute to effective learning.

Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS): CACUSS focuses on supporting student services professionals in post-secondary institutions. They often provide resources and training related to student success, which may include information on learning strategies.

Learning Specialists Association of Canada (LSAC), https://learningspecialists.ca/ : The Learning Specialists Association of Canada (LSAC) is a professional organization dedicated to supporting the development and advancement of learning specialists across Canada. LSAC offers networking opportunities, professional development resources, and advocacy for individuals working in various educational settings to enhance student learning and academic success.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

Most post-secondary institutions in Canada provide academic success and learning support programs and resources that are available to all students, however there are few academic support programs designed specially for international students. Below are a few examples of PSI academic and learning support resources tailored for international students.

1. **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)**: Kwantlen Polytechnic University offers academic success supports for international students including an online book, 'Preparing for the Canadian Classroom' to provide academic support and help international students gain skills to navigate Canadian post-secondary classrooms; academic success videos and website content.

2. **University of British Columbia (UBC):** University of British Columbia provides an International Students Support Groups that includes group sessions on academic support
3. **University of Calgary**: University of Calgary provides student success programming and advising designed for international students, these resources include, individual academic development support where students can access one-on-one consultations with an academic development specialist (international). In addition, international students have access to academic planning support for students with English as an additional language.

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Social Life and Community Engagement

Forming connections with peers and communities is integral to the experiences of international students in post-secondary institutions. It is crucial for both international and domestic students to engage in cross-cultural exchange, share perspectives, learn from each other, and establish meaningful networks, enriching their educational journey. However, international students often encounter barriers in cultivating these connections, whether on or off campus. These barriers include discrimination, language challenges, and feelings of isolation. Additionally, many international students struggle to develop friendships with local peers, as documented by Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood (2018). Consequently, some students express a lack of belonging and connection within their campus community.

Institutions play a pivotal role in facilitating programs and activities that support international students in making meaningful connections with their peers and developing communities. Removing barriers to these connections requires a multifaceted approach, which involves cross-institutional support, equitable approaches and cultural understanding (Yeh & Inose, 2003, Wei et al., 2020). Merely relying on students sharing physical proximity, such as in classrooms, is insufficient; institutions must be deliberate and proactive in creating environments that are conducive to relationship building. It is imperative that international students are not only welcomed but also recognized as valuable contributors within these spaces. Often, these interpersonal connections serve as crucial support systems, aiding students in navigating challenges. Given that a sense of belonging is fundamental to most individuals, particularly students, practitioners and administrators have a clear responsibility for fostering meaningful community engagement within Canadian universities and colleges.

Description

Student community engagement plays a vital role in the overall well-being and academic achievement of international students. Social and cultural engagement is essential for the holistic development and academic achievement of international students. Ideally, this engagement begins during orientation activities, pre- and post-arrival, and continues throughout the student's time at the institution. Actively participating in campus and local communities enhances social connections, cultural understanding, and personal development.

This area of support includes a range of activities and opportunities for international students to connect with peers, explore diverse cultures, and engage with local and diaspora communities in meaningful ways. Whether through involvement in socio-cultural gatherings, membership in student clubs and groups, participation in topical seminars, or engagement in community outreach activities, these initiatives strive to foster cross-cultural appreciation, build social connections, and instill a sense of belonging for international students (Brown & Jones, 2019; Smith et al., 2020). Through these immersive experiences, students not only broaden their own perspectives but also cultivate the essential skills for navigating diverse environments within an interconnected, globalized world (Johnson & Lee, 2018; Wang & Cheng, 2021).

An essential aspect of developing programs, events, and activities aimed at fostering connections between international and domestic students is ensuring active gathering and utilization of feedback. Institutions must prioritize lifting up the voices of international students, actively seeking their input, and integrating their perspectives into decision-making processes. Any initiatives should be grounded in the insights gleaned directly from student feedback; in essence, it's crucial to respect the principle of

"Nothing about us without us." Institutions must establish mechanisms to advocate for and facilitate opportunities for student input, ensuring that their voices are not only heard but also acted upon. When students witness their perspectives represented in programming, it enhances their sense of belonging and underscores the importance of their voices. Creating inclusive campus environments hinges on students feeling respected and valued, and actively incorporating their feedback is paramount to achieving this goal.

Guiding Principles

Inclusivity and Diversity: Ensure that supports are inclusive of diverse cultural backgrounds and promote intercultural understanding. Engage with groups that are participating in events and programs, but also pay close attention to groups that are not connecting. Elicit feedback from students and local communities to better understand who is attracted to institutional offerings and who is not feeling reflected or included. Using research, feedback and experience, find ways to build programs help students feel connected and a place of belonging.

Accessibility: Make supports readily accessible to all international students, considering language barriers and varying levels of familiarity with Canadian systems. Consider using various approaches to offering programs and activities, allowing for students to engage that are more comfortable and aligned with what works for them.

Empowerment: Empower international students to actively participate in their social integration process and provide opportunities for leadership and engagement.

Cultural Sensitivity: Approach support provision with cultural sensitivity and awareness of the unique challenges faced by international students.

Collaboration: Foster collaboration between institutional stakeholders, student organizations, and external partners to maximize support effectiveness.

Questions

1. *How is the institution engaging domestic students and elevating a sense of responsibility for contributing to a campus environment that is welcoming and inclusive of international students?*
2. *How does the institution incorporate student voices and feedback into student support programming*
3. *What mechanisms are in place to ensure the accessibility and inclusivity of support services for international students?*
4. *How does the institution foster a sense of belonging and community among international students?*
5. *How does the institution collaborate with off campus community organizations to enhance social support resources for international students?*
6. *How does the institution promote cultural diversity and inclusivity within the campus community?*
7. *How does the institution assess the effectiveness of its support programs in fostering a sense of belonging among international students?*
8. *How does the institution recognize who is not engaging – creating diversity in offerings to appeal to a broad group of students?*

Foundational Support

Institutions can facilitate and create programs and activities that include cultural celebrations, food-sharing gatherings, collaborative projects, and other avenues for students to both impart and gain knowledge from one another. It is essential to refrain from viewing and discussing students through a deficit or othering lens and instead recognize the diverse contributions and experiences international students bring to the campus community. Emphasizing quality engagement over quantity, the focus should be on fostering environments where relationships can flourish and students feel valued and heard. Meaningful connections can emerge through collaborative projects, faith-based interactions, campus involvement, and participation in leadership programs. The following programs and activities can foster social and community engagement.

Intercultural events: Hosting and supporting intercultural events bring together students from diverse backgrounds to share their cultures, traditions, and experiences, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

Faith-based programs: These programs provide opportunities for students to engage in religious or spiritual activities, connect with peers who share similar beliefs, and explore their faith in a supportive environment.

Peer connection programs: These programs are socially based and bring students together to facilitate friendship, support, and cultural exchange, helping newcomers navigate campus life and feel more connected. Creating opportunities for students to have fun together in casual and more comfortable settings.

Mentorship and conversation partner programs: Through mentorship, experienced students provide guidance and support to new students, while conversation partner programs pair students to practice language skills and learn about each other's cultures in casual settings.

Leadership programs: These programs empower students to develop leadership skills, build confidence, and make a positive impact on campus and beyond through workshops, training sessions, volunteer and experiential learning opportunities.

Online communities and social media: Online platforms allow international students to connect virtually, share experiences, seek advice, and build relationships with peers, providing support and a sense of belonging even from a distance.

Cultural celebrations: These events showcase various cultures through food, performances, and activities, allowing students to celebrate diversity, learn about different traditions, and build connections within the campus community.

Advanced Support

Intercultural Workshops: Workshops and seminars that promote cross-cultural understanding, communication skills, and cultural competency among students, faculty, and staff.

Community Engagement Initiatives: Opportunities for international students to engage with local and diaspora communities through volunteer work, cultural events, and community service projects.

Global Centers: On-campus hubs provide resources, programming, and community spaces for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Creating spaces on campus that are dedicated to intercultural connections and create a welcoming space for international students, enriches a campus community.

Language Exchange Programs: These programs can facilitate language learning and cultural exchange between international and domestic students.

International Student Advisory Groups: Student Advisory Groups provide a platform for international students to voice their concerns, share feedback, and collaborate with university staff to enhance the international student experience and campus community. These groups serve as advocates for the needs and interests of the international student community, fostering a supportive and inclusive campus environment.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

In-Person Workshops and Events: On-campus workshops, seminars, and social events organized by student services offices, clubs, and cultural centers.

Online Resources and Communities: Virtual and online support platforms, including online forums, social media groups, and webinars, facilitating communication and resource sharing among international students.

Peer-to-Peer Support: Peer mentorship programs that facilitate one-on-one support and guidance between international students.

Individualized Support Services: One-on-one advising, counseling, and mentoring services tailored to meet the specific needs of international students.

External Resources

Government Agencies: Resources and information provided by government agencies that offer supports for temporary and permanent residents.
Non-Profit Organizations: Non-profit organizations specializing in immigrant and newcomer support services, offering resources, workshops, and community events tailored to international students.
Cultural Centers and Community Organizations: Cultural centers, ethnic associations, and community organizations that provide cultural programming, language classes, and networking opportunities for international students.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

1. **Langara College**: Langara College through their Langara Global Office offers opportunities for international students to meet peers, build community and get involved with campus activities and

events. Students can participate in the Langara Global Volunteer program and the i-Guide Mentorship program.

2. **University of Victoria:** University of Victoria's Global Community Programs offer a engaging and inclusive environments for international and domestic students through a range of events, workshops, and cultural activities, these programs promote cross-cultural understanding, foster meaningful connections, and provide valuable support networks for students from around the world. Programs and Activities include:
    - Mentorship program
    - Conversation partner program
    - Student advisory council
    - Socio-cultural events
    - Student leadership opportunities

3. **University of British Columbia:** University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBC-O) facilitates an Intercultural Development Program (IDP) that includes workshops, social involvement, community-building, and volunteering activities facilitated by experienced staff and student coordinators. The program is designed to help students build community while developing self-awareness, engaging in social situations and deepen intercultural communication capacity.

    UBC-Vancouver provides the Global Lounge which serves as a hub for international students, providing a welcoming space for cultural exchange, community events, and networking opportunities. The lounge hosts weekly social events, language exchange programs, and cultural celebrations to foster cross-cultural understanding and friendship.

4. **University of Toronto (U of T):** University of Toronto provides the International Student Experience Program which offers a range of services and supports to enhance the social and academic experience of international students. This includes orientation sessions, social events, mentorship programs, and access to multicultural resources on campus.

5. **McGill University:** McGill University facilitates a Buddy Program that pairs incoming international students with current students to facilitate social integration and cultural exchange. Buddies provide support, guidance, and friendship to help new students navigate campus life and feel more connected to the McGill community.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities

Campus Community:

Cultural Competency Training: Training sessions and workshops for faculty, staff, and student leaders focused on cultural competency, diversity awareness, and supporting international students.

Peer Mentor Training: Training programs for peer mentors, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support incoming international students.

Practitioner:

Conference Workshops and Seminars: Various conferences, such as the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) Conference and the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) Conference, and British Columbia Council for International Education(BCCIE) offer workshops and seminars focused on international student support, cross-cultural communication, and diversity inclusion.

Online Courses and Webinars: Institutions like the Centre for Intercultural Learning offer online courses and webinars on topics such as intercultural competency, cross-cultural communication, and working effectively with international students.

Community Engagement and Partnerships: Collaborating with local community organizations, immigrant support centers, or cultural associations can provide practitioners with valuable insights and training opportunities to better serve international students from diverse backgrounds.

Intercultural Experiences: Participating in intercultural immersion programs, language exchanges, or international study tours can deepen practitioners' understanding of different cultures and enhance their ability to support international students effectively.

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Wellbeing and Mental Health

International Student Support Services play a pivotal role in addressing the distinctive needs and challenges that are encountered by international students in Canada, including those pertaining to their mental health and overall well-being. Such services are considered essential to ensure that international students receive the necessary assistance and support to successfully navigate the academic and social landscape of Canada. However, student supports across the institutions need to play a role in supporting the well being and mental health of international students.

British Columbia universities and colleges are dedicated to offering a wide range of support to international students, encompassing academic, social, cultural, and personal assistance. Collaboration between international departments, student wellness centres, student life offices and counselling services within institutions can offer tailored support and resources for international students.

Description

Studying in a new country can present numerous challenges for international students, encompassing cultural adjustments, language barriers, academic pressures, social integration, and unfamiliar healthcare systems. Mental health and wellness resources can aid international offices in recognizing these challenges and offering tailored support options to address them effectively.

Services can include personalized one-on-one counselling sessions designed to cater to the specific needs of international students. These sessions provide a confidential space for students to discuss academic stress, cultural adaptation, homesickness, or any other personal challenges they may be encountering. Counsellors in these roles are trained to offer culturally sensitive support and assist students in developing strategies to navigate their new environment successfully.

Additionally, group support options may be available, where international students can connect with peers facing similar challenges. These group sessions foster a supportive community, allowing students to share experiences, offer advice, and build meaningful connections Through collaborative and holistic advising, students also become better aware of their healthcare options, access medical services, and address health-related issues.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for all of these services can be summarized as follows:

- **Accessibility**: Ensure that all services are easily accessible to international students, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances. This includes physical accessibility, language accessibility, and cultural accessibility.
- **Inclusivity**: Foster an inclusive and welcoming environment where international students feel respected, valued, and supported regardless of their cultural background, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, abilities, or any other characteristic.
- **Cultural Sensitivity**: Recognize and respect the diversity of cultures represented among international students. Provide culturally sensitive support and resources that acknowledge and honor the unique perspectives, traditions, and needs of international students from various cultural backgrounds.

- **Empowerment**: Empower international students to make informed decisions and actively participate in their academic, social, and personal development. Offer opportunities for skill-building, self-advocacy, and leadership development to enhance students' sense of agency and self-efficacy.
- **Collaboration**: Foster collaboration and partnerships among various campus departments, community organizations, and student groups to provide comprehensive support and resources for international students. Work together to address the holistic needs of international students and leverage collective expertise and resources.
- **Confidentiality and Privacy**: Ensure the confidentiality and privacy of international students seeking support services, counseling, or guidance. Respect international students' right to privacy and maintain confidentiality in accordance with professional standards and legal requirements.
- **Holistic Support**: Take a holistic approach to supporting international students, addressing their academic, social, emotional, and cultural needs. Offer a range of services, resources, and programs that promote holistic well-being and academic success among international students.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of support services and programs for international students. Seek feedback from international students to identify areas for improvement and continuously strive to enhance the quality, accessibility, and relevance of services.
- **Advocacy**: Advocate for the rights, interests, and needs of international students within the university or college community and beyond. Advocate for policies, practices, and resources that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion for international students.
- **Community Building**: Foster a sense of community and belonging among international students by providing opportunities for connection, cultural exchange, and mutual support. Create spaces where international students can build meaningful relationships, share experiences, and engage in collaborative learning and growth.

Questions

These questions can serve as starting points for administrators and practitioners to reflect on and discuss how they can effectively implement holistic and equity-based support services for international students. This section includes more questions than listed in previous sections as there are multiple units and departments that might be involved in providing wellbeing and mental health supports for international students.

1. **Accessibility**:
    - *How can we ensure that our services are physically accessible to international students, including those with mobility challenges?*
    - *Are our materials and communications available in multiple languages to accommodate international students with diverse language backgrounds?*
    - *How can we make our services more culturally accessible to international students from different cultural backgrounds?*
2. **Inclusivity**:
    - *What steps can we take to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for international students from diverse backgrounds?*

- *How can we ensure that our services are inclusive of international students regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or cultural background?*
- *Are there any specific cultural considerations we should be aware of when providing support to international students?*

3. **Cultural Sensitivity:**
    - *How can we enhance our cultural competence to better understand and address the needs of international students from different cultural backgrounds?*
    - *Are our support services tailored to respect and honor the cultural traditions and values of international students?*
    - *How can we ensure that international students feel comfortable seeking support and accessing resources that are sensitive to their cultural backgrounds?*
4. **Empowerment:**
    - *What opportunities can we provide for international students to develop skills, build confidence, and take ownership of their academic and personal growth?*
    - *How can we support international students in advocating for their own needs and preferences within the university community?*
    - *Are there ways we can encourage international students to become leaders and actively engage in shaping the support services offered on campus?*
5. **Collaboration:**
    - *How can we collaborate with other campus departments, community organizations, and student groups to provide more comprehensive support to international students?*
    - *Are there opportunities for joint programming or initiatives that could benefit international students by leveraging resources and expertise from different areas?*
    - *How can we ensure effective communication and coordination among stakeholders involved in supporting international students?*
6. **Confidentiality and Privacy:**
    - *What policies and procedures do we have in place to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of international students seeking support services?*
    - *How do we communicate to international students about their rights to confidentiality and privacy when accessing support services?*
    - *Are staff members trained on maintaining confidentiality and handling sensitive information appropriately?*
7. **Holistic Support:**
    - *In what ways can we expand our support services to address the holistic needs of international students, including academic, social, emotional, and cultural aspects?*
    - *How can we integrate holistic support into existing programs and services to ensure a comprehensive approach?*
    - *Are there gaps in our current support offerings that need to be addressed to better meet the holistic needs of international students?*
8. **Continuous Improvement:**
    - *How do we gather feedback from international students about their experiences with our support services, and how can we use this feedback to improve?*
    - *What mechanisms do we have in place to regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of our support services for international students?*

- *How can we foster a culture of continuous improvement within our team to ensure that we are always striving to enhance the quality and relevance of our services?*

9. **Advocacy:**
    - *In what ways can we advocate for policies and practices that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion for international students within the university community?*
    - *How can we support international students in advocating for their own rights and needs within the university?*
    - *Are there opportunities for collaboration with other advocacy groups or stakeholders to amplify the voices of international students and effect change?*

Foundational and Advanced Support

Supports for international students are instrumental in promoting the mental health and well-being of international students in Canada. International departments collaborate to enhance the quality of student support services for international students. This is accomplished by ensuring that such services are equipped to meet the unique needs of international students and are inclusive of diverse perspectives.

Orientation Programs: International departments may collaborate with student experience departments responsible for orientation programs to aid international students in adjusting to the Canadian educational system, culture, and lifestyle. These orientations often include information on available mental health resources, information about health insurance, and our health-related services.

Counseling and Health Clinic Services: Collaboration with on-campus counselling and health clinic services provide tailored counselling, workshops, and support groups for international students addressing homesickness, loneliness, academic stress, and cultural adaptation.

Workshops and Seminars: A series of workshops and seminars are developed that are geared towards enhancing mental health awareness, stress management, coping strategies, and cultural adaptation for international students. The primary objective of these initiatives is to foster a conducive environment that offers international students the opportunity to learn, share experiences, and connect with their peers who encounter similar challenges.

Peer Support Programs: Some student support departments facilitate peer support programs where international students can connect with trained peer mentors for informal support, guidance, and companionship. Peer support programs help alleviate feelings of isolation and enhance social connections, which are crucial for mental well-being.

Resource Referrals: ISSS staff are typically well-informed about mental health resources available both on and off campus, including counseling services, support groups, helplines, and community organizations. They can provide information and referrals to assist international students in accessing appropriate support.

Cultural Competency Training: In order to provide culturally sensitive support and improve the experiences of international students, it is recommended that international departments engage in collaborative efforts with community organizations or equity departments to provide staff training in cultural competency. By doing so, staff can gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by international students and acquire the necessary skills to provide effective support. This training

enables staff to address mental health concerns effectively while respecting cultural differences and individual preferences.

Online Resources: Student service portfolios provide a wealth of online resources related to mental health and general wellness, including articles, self-help tools, and information on accessing support services. These resources are accessible to international students anytime and can complement in-person support.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

Academic Advising and Support Services: International students can utilize tutoring, study skills workshops, and academic advising to improve their academic performance and adjust to the Canadian educational system.

Career Development Services: These services assist international students in exploring career options, writing resumes tailored to the Canadian job market, and preparing for interviews. Career counsellors can provide guidance on work permits, internships, and co-op opportunities, helping international students gain valuable work experience while studying.

Counseling and Mental Health Services: International students facing cultural adjustment challenges, homesickness, mental health, and general concerns can access confidential counseling sessions and support groups. Mental health professionals can provide culturally sensitive support and resources to help international students cope with stress and maintain their well-being.

Disability Support Services: International students with disabilities can benefit from accommodations and support services to ensure equal access to education and campus facilities. Disability support offices can assist international students in navigating the accommodation process and connecting with relevant resources to support their academic success.

Financial Aid and Scholarships: International students can seek guidance on financial aid options, budgeting, and managing tuition fees. Additionally, assistance with scholarship applications and accessing bursaries – when available – can help alleviate financial burdens and support international students in their academic pursuits.

Indigenous Student Services: International Indigenous students can access culturally sensitive support, programming, and resources to connect with Indigenous communities on campus. Indigenous student centers offer opportunities for cultural exchange, support for academic success, and connection to Indigenous traditions and resources.

LGBTQ+ and Equity Support Services: International LGBTQ+ students can find support, advocacy, and resources in LGBTQ+ student centers. These services provide a safe and inclusive space for international LGBTQ+ students to connect with peers, access counseling support, and participate in educational workshops and events.

It may also be that international students have no frame of reference or understanding regarding LGBTQ+ or gender diverse students. Providing this information in a safe and welcoming environment may be considered.

Health and Wellness Services: International students can access medical care, wellness programming, and health education to maintain their physical and mental well-being while studying abroad. By collaborating with international departments, health centers offer culturally sensitive care and resources to support international students in navigating the British Columbia healthcare system.

Multifaith Services: Multifaith services offer an environment for international students to explore and practice their religious beliefs while away from home. These services provide a platform for students of diverse faith backgrounds to come together, share their traditions, and support one another in their spiritual journeys. Whether seeking guidance, community, or simply a place to connect with others who share similar beliefs, multifaith services can support diverse needs of international students.

Housing and Residence Services: International students can receive assistance with housing options, roommate matching, and support for issues related to on-campus living. Residence life programming provides opportunities for international students to connect with peers, engage in cultural exchange, and participate in community-building activities.

Dietary Options and Food Security: In today's fiscal climate, food security is a challenge for many, for international students they have the additional challenge of finding culturally appropriate food. Institutions can work with their food services and local food providers to ensure diverse food choices are available.

Overall, these student support services offer a range of resources and assistance tailored to the unique needs of international students, helping them navigate academic, social, and personal challenges while studying abroad in Canada.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities

These professional development training options can provide staff members with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to effectively support international students and create a welcoming and inclusive campus environment.

Mental Health First Aid Training:

- Description: This training provides staff members with the skills and knowledge to recognize signs of mental health concerns and provide initial support to international students experiencing mental health challenges. This is particularly relevant as some international students are not aware of mental health (it doesn't exist in their culture) and may not have words to describe how they are feeling.
- Objectives: Increase awareness of common mental health issues among international students, reduce stigma around mental health, and learn practical strategies for offering support and referrals.
- Content: Topics may include common mental health disorders, crisis intervention techniques, suicide prevention, active listening skills, and accessing mental health resources.
- Format: Instructor or staff led training sessions, scenario-based learning, group discussions, and role-playing exercises.

Cross-Cultural Counseling Techniques Training:

- Description: This training focuses on equipping staff members with culturally responsive counseling techniques and interventions to support the mental health and well-being of international students effectively.
- Objectives: Enhance cultural competence in counseling practices, understand the impact of culture on help-seeking behaviors, and develop skills for providing culturally sensitive support.

- Content: Topics may include cultural influences on mental health, adapting counseling approaches to diverse cultural backgrounds, addressing cultural barriers in therapy, and incorporating cultural rituals and traditions into counseling sessions.
- Format: Workshops led by mental health professionals, case studies, experiential learning activities, and discussions on cross-cultural counseling challenges and strategies.

International Student Advising Best Practices Workshop:

- Description: This workshop can also be an informative webinar or panel. The training focuses on sharing best practices and strategies for providing comprehensive advising and support services to international students throughout their academic journey.
- Objectives: Enhance advising skills specific to the needs of international students, understand immigration regulations and support services available to international students, and learn effective strategies for promoting academic success and cultural adjustment.
- Content: Topics may include academic advising for international students, supporting international students during cultural transitions, crisis intervention strategies, and resources for international students.
- Format: Panel discussions with experienced advisors, case studies, interactive sessions on advising scenarios, and networking opportunities for sharing best practices among participants.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

Capilano University (CapU): Capilano University offers a wide range of services for international students, offered by professionals in a variety of units dedicated to supporting CapU students. Resources include one-on-one appointments, virtual sessions and workshops.

Vancouver Island University (VIU): Vancouver Island University provides clear guidance, information and referrals on comprehensive wellness supports for international students. Not all of the support units have specialized services for international students, but the International Student Services acts as a hub to ensure coordination and a holistic approach among the services to support international students.

University of British Columbia (UBC): The University of British Columbia Okanagan International Office collaborates closely with the Student Wellness Team to support international students comprehensively. Together, they prioritize the well-being of international students by offering a range of services to holistically address their unique needs. In partnership with the Student Wellness Team, the International Office triages international student support, ensuring that students receive timely assistance and resources to navigate challenges related to mental health and other personal concerns.

Durham College (DC): Durham College provides specialized health and wellness supports for international students including an international wellness check-up available for international students to meet with medical professionals in a international health team. Services in multiple languages are available.

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Career Development

International students encounter unique challenges in their career development, including cultural adjustment difficulties, language barriers, and the need for familial and community support in their career planning and decision-making (Li et al., 2019; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2009; Li & Lindo, 2022). These challenges can significantly impact their career pathways and decision-making processes, making it essential for them to receive specific career supports tailored to their needs (Lee et al., 2019; Mills et al., 2019; Zeltner, 2020). Research has shown that international students often possess a wide range of cultural assets, such as resilience, multilingualism, and strong familial support, which can be leveraged to support their career development (Anandavalli et al., 2022). Additionally, the importance of peer support in providing validation, inclusion, and career-related information for international students has been highlighted in the literature (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007).

Furthermore, the career advising needs of international students are influenced by individual factors, including their acculturation experiences, English proficiency, interpersonal relationship difficulties, and visa and legal issues (Li et al., 2019; Arthur & Popadiuk, 2009; Li & Lindo, 2022). It has been noted that international students may not find traditional advising services particularly helpful and may seek support from alternative sources such as peers, instructors, and international student advisors (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the cultural and contextual factors that shape international students' career decision-making difficulties and career development (Li & Lindo, 2022).

The transition from study to work for international students requires comprehensive support that addresses their unique experiences and challenges, including the need for technology-based career resources, continual decision-making, and preparation for transitions, as well as the impact of cultural awareness on their career decision-making processes (Lee et al., 2019; Mills et al., 2019; Zeltner, 2020). Additionally, the role of family and community ties in international students' career planning and decision-making has been emphasized, highlighting the significance of incorporating multiple points of view and negotiating conflicting academic and career goals that may impact their future support and interactions (Arthur et al., 2022; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2013).

Overall, providing tailored career supports for international students is crucial for addressing their unique challenges and facilitating their successful career development. These supports should take into account their cultural assets, individual factors, and the need for peer, familial, and community support, while also considering the impact of acculturation experiences and the transition from study to work on their career pathways.

Description

Career supports for international students in British Columbia aim to provide comprehensive assistance to students in their career development and employment endeavors, both for those who choose to stay in Canada after their studies and for those who return to their home countries. These supports encompass a range of services, resources, and programs designed to equip international students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and connections to excel in their chosen career paths.

International students face unique challenges in their career development that may include:

- Not enough (Canadian) work experience
- Cultural adjustment difficulties
- Difficulty in securing Canadian references (or having international references accepted)
- Eligible employers who do not understand hiring regulations for international students

- Unrecognized bias by employers
- Government funded positions where the employee must be a Canadian or have Permanent Residency
- Language Barriers

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Ensuring career supports are accessible and tailored to the diverse needs of international students from different cultural backgrounds.
- **Collaboration:** Fostering partnerships between educational institutions, employers, government agencies, and community organizations to enhance employment opportunities for international students.
- **Holistic Approach:** Recognizing the importance of addressing both career development and settlement needs to facilitate successful transitions for international students.
- **Sustainability:** Building career supports that can adapt to changing trends, technologies, and labor market demands to maximize long-term success for international students.
- **Student-Centered:** Placing the needs and aspirations of international students at the forefront to provide relevant, personalized career support.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Regularly assess and refine support programs based on feedback and emerging needs.

Questions

1. *What are the specific goals, aspirations, and expectations of our international student population regarding their careers?*
2. *How can career supports be tailored to address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by international students in British Columbia?*
3. *What are the cultural and contextual factors that may impact how international students perceive and approach career development?*
4. *What are the prevailing labor market trends and future employment prospects for international students, both in Canada and globally?*
5. *How can we ensure that international students are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks to navigate both local and international job markets?*

Foundational Support

Career support for international students in British Columbia encompasses various services and resources aimed at assisting students in their career exploration, job search, and post-graduation employment. Career support for international students in British Columbia aims to equip them with the necessary tools, knowledge, and resources to explore career opportunities, develop professional skills, and successfully transition from their academic journey to post graduation, whether it is in Canada or abroad.

Access to Career Advising Services:

- Offers guidance on career exploration, goal setting, and action planning.

- Helps students identify their skills, interests, and career paths suitable for their academic background.
- Provides support in creating personalized career plans and setting achievable goals.

Resources and Workshops for Job Preparation:

- Provides resources on resume writing, cover letter crafting, and job searching strategies specific to the Canadian job market.
- Offers workshops and seminars on interview techniques, networking skills, and employer expectations.
- Assists students in developing effective job application strategies tailored to their career goals.

Specialized Job Boards and Online Platforms:

- Offers dedicated job boards or online platforms exclusively for international students.
- Connects students with employment opportunities that cater to their specific needs and requirements.
- Facilitates access to internships, co-op placements, part-time jobs, and full-time positions.

Guidance on Work Permit Regulations:

- Assists students with understanding work permit regulations and eligibility criteria.
- Provides information on transitioning from study permits to work permits for prospective employment in Canada after graduation.
- Offers guidance on work permit application processes and required documentation.

Collaboration with Support Services:

- Collaborates with other support services, such as immigration advising and settlement assistance.
- Addresses broader needs related to employment and settlement while considering the unique challenges faced by international students.
- Coordinates efforts to provide comprehensive support, ensuring successful integration into the workforce and Canadian society.

Volunteer Opportunities on Campus or in the community:

- Allows student to gain experience in the Canadian workplace and gather references for future employment. If the volunteering position is not in their field of study, it can speak to their soft skills that can be used to share their adaptability and employability on their resume.

Advanced Support

In addition to general career support, institutions and service providers can offer advanced or specialized resources to further enhance the career development of international students. These advanced and specialized supports can differentiate the service level that an institution provides to its students and can have a major impact on their career's prospects post-graduation. It is recommended to aim to provide international students with targeted resources and experiences to further enhance their career prospects. By participating in work-integrated learning opportunities, attending sector-specific events, connecting with mentors, exploring industry job fairs, or accessing entrepreneurship programs, students can gain valuable insights, experiences, and connections that contribute to their overall career development and success.

Work-Integrated Learning Opportunities:

- Co-op programs or internships enable international students to gain valuable Canadian work experience.
- Provides opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios and develop industry-specific skills.
- Enhances students' resumes and increases their competitiveness in the job market.
- One of the best ways for international students to gain Canadian work experience in a safe and welcoming environment is through on-campus employment.

Sector-Specific Career Workshops and Events:

- Industry-focused workshops, speaker series, or employer panels offer insights into current industry trends and practices.
- Facilitates networking opportunities with professionals and connects students to potential mentors.
- Allows students to gain industry-specific knowledge and build relevant connections in their desired fields of study.

Mentorship Programs:

- Connects international students with professionals and alumni in their desired fields of study.
- Provides guidance, advice, and industry-specific insights to help students navigate their career paths.
- Builds valuable connections and expands students' professional networks.

Industry-Specific Job Fairs and Recruitment Events:

- Organizes events where international students can interact with local employers and explore job opportunities.
- Offers a platform for students to showcase their skills, learn about industry requirements, and connect with potential employers.
- Facilitates direct interaction between students and employers in a focused and industry-specific environment.

Entrepreneurship Programs and Resources:

- Provides access to programs and resources for international students interested in entrepreneurship or starting their own businesses.
- Offers guidance on the process of establishing a business in British Columbia or globally.
- Supports the development of entrepreneurial skills, business planning, and access to relevant networks and funding opportunities.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

Career supports for international students that are provided by institutions in BC include a range of programming and resources designed to ensure their successful transition into the Canadian job market.

1. **One-on-One Career Advising and Advising Sessions**:
    - Personalized guidance from career advisors who help them explore career options and develop customized career plans.
    - Advising sessions provide students with opportunities to discuss their interests, skills, and goals in order to align them with suitable career paths.
    - Advisors offer expert advice and support throughout the career planning and decision-making process.

2. **Workshops and Seminars**:
    - Cover various topics such as resume and cover letter writing, job search strategies, networking skills, and interview techniques.
    - Equip international students with essential professional skills required for the Canadian job market.
    - Provide practical tips and insights to help students showcase their strengths and stand out during the application and interview process.

2. **Experiential Learning Opportunities**:
    - Co-op programs, internships, and research projects offer international students hands-on work experience in their fields of study.
    - Enable students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios and develop industry-specific skills.
    - Enhance students' resumes and increase their employability upon graduation.

2. **Online Job Boards and Career Portals**:
    - Provide international students with access to exclusive job boards, career portals, and databases tailored to their needs.
    - Feature job postings specifically targeted towards international students, connecting them with local employers seeking their skills and qualifications.
    - Enable students to easily browse and apply for job opportunities relevant to their fields of study.

2. **Alumni Engagement Initiatives**:
    - Mentorship programs connect international students with successful alumni in their desired industries.
    - Mentors provide guidance, advice, and industry-specific insights, assisting students in navigating their career paths.
    - Networking events create opportunities for students to establish connections and form valuable professional networks with alumni and industry professionals.

2. **Support for Entrepreneurial Endeavors**:
    - Guidance is provided to international students interested in starting their own ventures.
    - Assistance in business plan development, access to funding opportunities, and mentorship support are offered.
    - Empowers students to pursue entrepreneurial aspirations and develop the necessary skills to succeed as business owners.

External Resources

Accessing these external resources can greatly benefit international students in British Columbia, as they provide additional support, networking opportunities, and specialized services beyond what may be available within their campuses.

1. **WorkBC**:
    - WorkBC is a provincial government resource that assists job seekers in British Columbia.
    - Offers job search assistance, employment counseling, access to training programs, and information on the local labor market.
    - Provides a wide range of resources and services to support career development and job placement.

2. **Professional Immigrant Networks and Associations**:
    - Various professional immigrant networks and associations exist, aiming to bridge the gap between skilled immigrants and employment opportunities in specific sectors.
    - These networks offer networking events, mentorship programs, industry-specific workshops, and job search assistance tailored to the needs of international professionals.
    - Connecting with these networks can provide valuable insights, industry contacts, and opportunities for career advancement.
2. **Local Immigration Settlement Agencies**:
    - Local immigration settlement agencies offer a range of services to support the settlement and integration of newcomers, including international students, into Canadian society.
    - These agencies provide information, workshops, and resources specifically related to employment, such as job search strategies, resume and cover letter writing assistance, and interview preparation support.
    - Seeking assistance from these agencies can enhance the employment prospects and overall settlement experience for international students.
2. **ISempower**:
    - They provide resources and services to support the professional development and integration of international students, including career coaching, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities.
    - Through ISempower, international students can access tools and guidance to navigate the Canadian job market and connect with career advancement opportunities.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

1. **British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)**: British Columbia institute of Technology hosts a Career Development for international student section on their website that includes information about programs, student groups and services that support international students in their career development. The BCIT Student Association also facilitates career support for students and alumni.

2. **University of Calgary:** At the University of Calgary the Career Services department collaborates with the International Student Services office to provide specialized career support for international students including extensive website content, one-on-one support with a dedicated career specialist, various workshops and engagement opportunities with experienced students.

3. **Carlton University:** Carlton University provides specialized career support for international students including extensive website content, a ‘ Navigating the Canadian Workplace’ workshop series, and in-person, telephone and email advising.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities

Opportunities for professional development and training in the area of career supports for international students may include:

1. British Columbia Career Development Association (BCCDA) workshops and conferences addressing best practices in career development for diverse populations.
2. Webinars and seminars offered by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) focusing on supporting the career development of international students.
3. Collaboration with local and international organizations that specialize in career development for international students, providing customized training and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

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Transition Beyond

Program Completion and Graduation

Supporting international students during and after graduation is essential for institutions due to several reasons. Firstly, comprehensive support ensures the successful academic journey of international students, positively impacting the institution's reputation and attracting prospective international students. Secondly, institutions contribute to the professional and personal growth of international students, preparing them to become successful alumni and advocates for their respective institutions, whether they choose to stay in the host country or return to their home countries (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). Thirdly, in a competitive global economy, institutions have a responsibility to equip international students with the necessary skills and resources to thrive in the job market, thereby empowering them to secure employment opportunities and contribute to the local and global workforce (Trần et al., 2022).

It is also crucial to recognize that international students' decisions to stay in Canada and B.C. or return to their home countries should be respected and supported. Institutions can provide resources and guidance to assist international students in their decision-making process, offering valuable insights about opportunities available in Canada and B.C., as well as connections to alumni networks in their home countries. Supporting international students regardless of their future plans allows institutions to maintain positive relationships and engagement with them, contributing to a strong alumni network and potential collaborations in the future.

Tailored supports, such as mentorship programs and inclusive advising practices, create a sense of belonging and address individual needs, promoting a successful transition into the workplace or further studies (Thompson et al., 2017). Additionally, institutions can provide resources and guidance to assist international students in their decision-making process, respecting their choices and contributing to a strong alumni network and potential collaborations in the future (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). Overall, providing comprehensive support for international students during graduation and post-graduation has numerous benefits for institutions. It enhances the reputation of the institution, fosters positive relationships with international students, prepares them to become successful alumni, and equips them with the skills and resources to excel in their chosen pathways, whether that be staying in Canada and BC or returning to their home countries. By recognizing the unique needs of international students and offering targeted supports, institutions demonstrate their dedication to diversity, inclusivity, and the overall success of their students.

Description

Every international student's journey toward program completion and graduation is unique, influenced by their backgrounds, goals, and individual circumstances. It is crucial to provide comprehensive and tailored supports that ensure a smooth transition throughout this phase. One key aspect of support is a focus on facilitating the immigration processes to mitigate any potential challenges that may arise.

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Tailor supports to meet the diverse needs of international students.
- **Equity:** Ensure equal access to resources and opportunities.
- **Holistic Approach:** Address academic, personal, and career-related aspects.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Recognize and respect cultural differences and provide culturally appropriate support.
- **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between stakeholders to enhance support services.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Regularly assess and refine support programs based on feedback and emerging needs.

Questions

1. *How can we assist international students in understanding and navigating the immigration processes?*
2. *What resources can be provided to help international students meet program requirements and progress towards graduation? And how can this be done throughout the academic program?*
3. *How can institutions support international students in developing essential skills for academic success?*
4. *What strategies can be implemented to foster cultural integration and create a sense of belonging?*
5. *How can we align career development initiatives to meet the unique needs of international students, including those related to immigration?*

Foundational Support

To ensure a smooth completion and graduation process for international students, the following minimum requirements should be considered:

Immigration Information and Support:

- Provide comprehensive guidance on immigration regulations, procedures, and documentation.

Academic Advising:

- Offer personalized assistance in course selection, academic planning, and program requirements.

Study Skills Resources:

- Deliver workshops and resources to enhance study skills, time management, and academic performance.

Cultural Integration Programs:

- Facilitate events, workshops, and initiatives to promote cross-cultural understanding and integration.

Graduation Planning:

- Assist international students in understanding graduation requirements and establishing a timeline for completion.

Advanced Support

There are many potential approaches to support international students' post-graduation. Advanced and specialized support goes beyond the preliminary requirements, recognizing the unique challenges international students may face in navigating the job market and building successful careers.

Peer Mentorship Programs:

- Establishing a peer mentorship program can greatly benefit international students. Pairing them with mentors who were once international students themselves can provide valuable guidance and insights. Mentors can offer support and advice on career development, job search strategies, networking, and cultural integration. Regular mentor-mentee meetings, workshops, and networking events can foster a strong sense of community and provide international students with a reliable support system.

Comprehensive Career Development Services:

- International students may require additional assistance in exploring career pathways and developing job search skills. Comprehensive career development services tailored to their needs should include workshops, seminars, and one-on-one advising to address topics such as resume and cover letter writing, interview preparation, job search strategies, and professional networking. These services should also provide guidance on navigating work permit processes, understanding visa requirements, and accessing relevant information on immigration policies.

Work-Integrated Learning Programs:

- Offer internships, co-op placements, volunteering, or other forms of work-integrated learning opportunities to international students. These programs provide valuable hands-on experience and allow students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. Facilitating connections between international students and local employers can enhance their understanding of the job market, build professional networks, and increase their chances of securing employment upon graduation. Support with work authorization, visa regulations, and cultural competency training for the workplace can also be included.

Alumni Engagement:

- Actively involve alumni networks in supporting international students. Alumni who have successfully navigated the post-graduation phase can serve as mentors, offering advice, sharing their career experiences, and providing valuable networking opportunities. Establish alumni events, networking sessions, or online platforms that bring international students and alumni together for mutual benefit. Additionally, alumni can contribute to career panels, industry workshops, and job shadowing opportunities, providing valuable insights into specific career paths.

Equity and Inclusion Initiatives:

- It is important to prioritize equity and inclusion in supporting international students post-graduation. Implement initiatives to ensure that support services are accessible to all, addressing potential barriers such as language barriers, lack of familiarity with local job markets, or discrimination. This may include providing language support, cultural competency training for employers, and advocating for inclusive hiring practices. Creating opportunities for international students to share their experiences, perspectives, and talents can also contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Post-Graduation Support for students returning to their home countries:

- Provide assistance to the student to ensure that their Canadian record of graduation (e.g. parchment, diploma, transcript) meets the needs of their future employer or academic requirements if continuing on with their education in a different country.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

Institutions can provide various types of programming to support international students during completion and graduation (with much of it starting well before graduation). By offering a comprehensive range of support programming, institutions can enhance the academic success, personal development, and career prospects of international students during their completion and graduation stages. These support services contribute to their overall well-being, ensuring a fulfilling educational experience and a smooth transition into their desired career paths.

- **Workshops and Seminars:** Conduct workshops and seminars covering essential topics such as academic writing, time management, cross-cultural communication, and career development. These sessions equip international students with practical skills and strategies to thrive academically and succeed in a culturally diverse educational environment.
- **Peer Tutoring Programs:** Establish peer tutoring programs where experienced international student tutors provide academic support and guidance. Pairing international students with tutors who have successfully navigated similar challenges fosters a supportive learning community, promoting collaborative learning, and improving academic performance.
- **Study Groups:** Encourage international students to form study groups to facilitate knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and mutual support. Study groups enable students to discuss and clarify concepts, strengthen understanding, and enhance their learning outcomes.
- **Personal Development Workshops:** Offer workshops focused on personal development to enhance non-academic skills. These workshops address important skills such as leadership development, resilience, effective communication, conflict resolution, and intercultural competence. By fostering personal growth and self-awareness, these workshops prepare international students for the challenges of the workplace and promote holistic well-being.
- **Career Exploration Events:** Organize events that expose international students to different career options and provide insights into various industries. These events can include guest speakers, alumni panels, employer networking sessions, and information sessions on employment trends and opportunities. Connecting international students with professionals and employers facilitates networking, mentorship, and career guidance.
- **Proactive Advising:** Implement a proactive advising approach, ensuring regular meetings between international students and academic advisors. These meetings serve as opportunities to track students' academic progress, discuss challenges, and provide guidance on course selection, post-graduation plans, and career pathways. Proactive advising ensures that international students receive personalized support throughout their academic journey.

External Resources

Post-graduation support for international students can be further enhanced through external resources outside of the institution. By connecting international students with these external resources,

institutions can provide a robust support system that extends beyond the campus. Collaborating with immigration support organizations, community services, language support programs, and professional associations ensures that international students have access to specialized guidance, counseling, language development, and industry-specific opportunities. These resources contribute to international students' successful transition into the workforce and promote their overall well-being as they navigate life beyond graduation.

1. **Immigration Support Organizations**:
    - Collaborate with immigration support organizations that specialize in providing guidance and assistance to international students. These organizations can offer expert advice on visa extensions, work permits, permanent residency applications, and other immigration-related matters. They can help international students navigate the complex immigration processes, ensuring they understand their rights, obligations, and available options.
2. **Community Services**:
    - Connect international students with community services that offer counseling, legal advice, and additional resources. These services can assist with a variety of needs, including mental health support, housing assistance, financial counseling, and general well-being. By partnering with local community organizations, institutions can provide a comprehensive support network that addresses the holistic needs of international students beyond their academic pursuits.
3. **Language Support Programs**:
    - Engage with language support programs that focus on assisting international students in improving their language skills. These programs can provide language courses, conversation circles, writing workshops, and language tutoring. Enhancing language proficiency not only benefits students' academic performance but also enhances their communication skills, opening up more opportunities in their personal and professional lives.
4. **Professional Associations**:
    - Encourage international students to connect with professional associations related to their field of study or career interests. Professional associations offer industry-specific resources, networking opportunities, and career support. By joining these associations, international students can access job boards, participate in industry events, connect with professionals in their field, and stay updated on industry trends. This can greatly enhance their post-graduation employment prospects and integration into the professional community.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples:

1. **Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU):** Kwantlen Polytechnic University provides an online Graduation Checklist for international students.

2. **Simon Fraser University (SFU):** Simon Fraser University provides extensive website content on next steps after graduation for international students. Information provided includes how to navigate medical insurance, and access employment resources and community engagement opportunities.

3. **University of British Columbia Vancouver (UBC)**: University of British Columbia Vancouver campus has a website with information specifically for international students about preparing to leave UBC after completing their studies. Information includes considerations for staying in Canada, further studies in Canada, and preparing to go home.

4. **University of Toronto (U of T):** University of Toronto provides specialized supports to help international students prepare for graduation including program-specific graduation checklists, website content outlining options to consider after graduation and access to International Student Experience Ambassadors.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities

Opportunities for staff training in supporting international students during completion and graduation can play a vital role in ensuring the provision of effective and comprehensive support.

1. **Workshops and Webinars:**
    - Immigration regulations: Training sessions can educate staff members on the latest immigration policies, procedures, and requirements that affect international students.
    - Intercultural competence: Workshops can focus on enhancing staff members' understanding of different cultural practices, values, and communication styles to better support international students.
    - Career development for international students: Training can provide guidance on helping international students explore career pathways, develop job search skills, and navigate the job market effectively.
2. **Certification Programs:**
    - Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF): Encourage staff members to pursue this specialized certification, which equips professionals with knowledge and skills to provide career services specifically tailored to international students.
3. **Conferences and Networking Events:**
    - International education conferences: These events offer workshops, presentations, and panel discussions that cover topics relevant to supporting international students during completion and graduation.
    - Networking opportunities: Encouraging staff members to attend conferences allows them to connect with professionals in the field, exchange ideas, and establish valuable networks for ongoing support and collaboration.
4. **Collaboration and Networking:**
    - Cross-departmental partnerships: Fostering collaboration among different departments within the institution enables a holistic approach to supporting international students. Staff members can share resources, expertise, and insights to provide comprehensive support.
    - External networking: Encourage staff members to network with professionals from other institutions, organizations, or associations involved in supporting international students. This external collaboration can bring in fresh ideas, industry best practices, and potential partnerships.

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Post-Study: Career and Alumni Engagement

It is important to note that the examples provided from other institutions are part of an ever-changing international education landscape. Since 2020, the education sector has witnessed significant shifts and changes, particularly in response to the global pandemic, geopolitical shifts and government policy adjustments. These circumstances have necessitated the implementation of various stop-gap approaches to programming and support, as well as adapting to new expectations from students.

Supporting international students during the post-study phase is essential for their successful transition into the workforce and maintaining strong alumni connections. Tailoring supports to meet the specific needs and goals of international students, fostering partnerships and collaboration, offering a range of support options, and promoting a culture of continuous professional growth are crucial in facilitating their career advancement and job search processes Shibani & Buck (2022). Additionally, emphasizing the value of international experiences and fostering strong ties between international students and alumni can contribute to their successful integration into the workforce and ongoing professional development (Braun, 2000).

Foundational support examples such as career advising, alumni networking events, workshops and webinars, job search resources, and alumni mentorship programs play a significant role in providing the necessary guidance and connections for international students to navigate the job market successfully (Segujja et al., 2023). Furthermore, advanced/specialized support, including industry-specific career coaching, experiential learning opportunities, entrepreneurship support programs, alumni professional networks, and alumni career panels and speaker events, can further enhance the support provided to international students, ensuring their meaningful contributions to their chosen fields and long-term career success (Hassenfeld et al., 2020).

Description

Supporting international students during the post-study phase is crucial for their successful transition into the workforce (whether in Canada or abroad) and maintaining strong alumni connections. This phase encompasses career advancement, alumni engagement, and ongoing support to ensure international students can make meaningful contributions to their chosen fields.

Guiding Principles

- **Relevance:** Tailor supports to meet the specific needs and goals of international students in their respective fields.
- **Collaboration:** Foster partnerships and collaboration between students, alumni, employers, and the institution.
- **Flexibility:** Offer a range of support options to accommodate diverse career paths and individual circumstances.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Promote a culture of continuous professional growth, allowing students to adapt to evolving job market needs.
- **Global Perspective:** Emphasize the value of international experiences and global networks for international students' career success.
- **Alumni Connection:** Foster strong ties between international students and alumni to provide mentorship and networking opportunities.

Questions

1. *How can we effectively support international students in their post-study career advancement and job search processes?*
2. *What strategies and resources can be provided to help international students establish and maintain connections with alumni networks?*
3. *How can institutions collaborate with employers to create employment opportunities and secure relevant work experiences for international students?*
4. *What supports can be offered to international students to enhance their cross-cultural communication skills and adaptability in the workplace?*
5. *How can we encourage international students to embrace lifelong learning and continuous professional development in their chosen fields?*

Foundational Support

Career Advising:

- Institutions can provide dedicated career advising services for international students, offering guidance on job search strategies, resume and cover letter writing, and interview preparation. Career advisors can help international students tailor their resumes to the local job market, highlight transferrable skills, and navigate cultural nuances in job applications and interviews.

Alumni Networking Events:

- Organizing networking events that bring together international students and alumni in their respective fields is a valuable way to facilitate connections. These events can include panel discussions, alumni-led workshops, and networking sessions, providing international students with opportunities to expand their professional networks, seek advice, and gain insights into their desired industries.

Workshops and Webinars:

- Institutions can offer professional development workshops and webinars that address specific topics relevant to international students' career success. These sessions can cover areas such as networking skills, personal branding, workplace culture, and leadership development. Through these interactive sessions, international students can develop vital skills and enhance their understanding of local employment practices.

Job Search Resources:

- Providing international students with access to job boards, career fairs, and online resources specific to international student job seekers is crucial. Institutions can curate job postings that cater to international students, including openings that offer visa sponsorship or other work authorization support. Additionally, hosting career fairs that bring together employers interested in hiring international talent can provide valuable opportunities for international students to connect with potential employers.

Alumni Mentorship Programs:

- Establishing alumni mentorship programs specifically catered to international students can be highly beneficial. Pairing international students with alumni mentors who share similar backgrounds or career interests allows for personalized guidance and industry insights. Alumni

mentors can provide advice, support, and networking opportunities that can greatly enhance international students' career prospects.

Advanced Support

By providing advanced and specialized support in these areas, institutions can empower international students to excel in their chosen industries and careers. These initiatives go beyond the foundational support and target specific needs and aspirations of international students, enhancing their professional development and facilitating long-term success.

Industry-Specific Career Coaching:

- Institutions can offer tailored career coaching and guidance for international students pursuing specific fields or industries. This specialized support can include industry-specific job search strategies, networking advice within the field, and insights into industry trends and requirements. Career coaches with expertise in various industries can provide personalized advice and mentorship to help international students navigate their career paths more effectively.

Experiential Learning Opportunities:

- Facilitating internships, research experiences, or cooperative education programs can provide international students with valuable industry-related experience. These opportunities allow students to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings, gain practical skills, and build professional networks. Institutions can establish partnerships with local businesses, industries, and research organizations to create these experiential learning opportunities specifically tailored to the needs of international students.

Entrepreneurship Support Programs:

- Institutions can provide support for international students who aspire to launch their own businesses or startups. This can be done through entrepreneurship support programs that offer mentorship, resources, and guidance. Mentors with entrepreneurial backgrounds can assist international students in developing business plans, accessing funding opportunities, and navigating the startup landscape. Additionally, institutions can provide access to co-working spaces, workshops, and networking events that foster entrepreneurial spirit and collaboration.

Alumni Professional Networks:

- Institutions can connect international students with established alumni networks or affinity groups within their targeted industries. Access to industry-specific alumni networks allows international students to expand their professional connections, seek career advice, and potentially find job opportunities. Alumni in the same field can offer insights, mentorship, and networking opportunities that can greatly facilitate international students' career growth and success.

Alumni Career Panels and Speaker Events:

- Organizing career panels and speaker events featuring successful alumni can be highly beneficial to international students. During these sessions, alumni can share their career journeys, experiences, and insights into specific industries or professions. International students can gain valuable industry knowledge, learn about career paths, and gather advice from those who have successfully navigated their chosen fields. These events also serve as networking opportunities,

allowing international students to connect with alumni who can potentially become mentors or provide further guidance.

Supports and Resource Delivery Options

By providing additional supports and resources, institutions can empower international students to effectively navigate the job market, build important skills, expand their networks, and develop a strong foundation for their careers. They contribute to a comprehensive support system that aids international students in their post-graduation success and facilitates their integration into the professional world.

- **Online Career Portals:** Institutions can offer centralized online platforms that provide international students with access to job listings, internship opportunities, and career development resources. These portals can also include tools and resources for interview preparation, resume building, and career planning. Online career portals serve as a one-stop-shop for international students to explore job opportunities, access support materials, and stay updated on the latest trends in their fields.

- **Professional Development Workshops:** Conducting professional development workshops specifically designed for international students can help them build essential skills for their careers. These workshops can cover topics such as leadership skills, negotiation tactics, effective communication in the workplace, and cultural competency. Offering interactive sessions facilitated by industry professionals or career advisors allows international students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen fields.

- **Networking Events:** Organizing industry-specific networking events that bring together international students, alumni, and employers can provide valuable networking opportunities. These events create a platform for international students to interact with professionals in their fields, build connections, and learn about industry insights. Institutions can host networking events on-campus or virtually, facilitating meaningful conversations, mentorship opportunities, and potential job or internship leads for international students.

- **Alumni Database Access:** Providing international students with access to an alumni database or online platform can assist them in connecting with alumni who share similar career interests. This resource enables international students to reach out to alumni for advice, mentorship, or informational interviews. Alumni can offer valuable insights into specific industries, share their career experiences, and provide guidance on navigating professional challenges. By establishing this connection, international students can benefit from the wisdom and networks of alumni, enhancing their career prospects.

- **Mentoring Programs:** Institutions can establish structured mentoring programs that pair international students with experienced professionals in their fields. These mentorship programs provide international students with personalized guidance, career advice, and support. Mentors can share their industry knowledge, provide insights into career pathways, and assist in developing important professional skills. Structured mentoring programs facilitate meaningful relationships and offer international students ongoing support and guidance as they embark on their career journeys.

External Resources

Institutions can provide international students with information and referrals to external resources, recognizing that the support available extends beyond the campus environment. By connecting international students to professional associations, community immigrant services, and immigrant employment agencies, institutions can enhance their support services and help international students access a broader range of resources and opportunities. Collaborating with these external organizations can also contribute to a holistic support system for international students' career development and post-graduation success

- **Professional Associations:** International students can benefit from connecting with industry-specific professional associations. These associations often provide resources, networking events, conferences, and job opportunities that are relevant to specific professions or fields. Institutions can guide international students in identifying and joining professional associations related to their areas of interest. Membership in these associations can offer valuable networking opportunities, access to industry-specific resources, and exposure to current trends and developments in the field.

- **Community Immigrant Services:** Local community immigrant services organizations can provide support to international students in various aspects, including career counseling, language training, and job search assistance. These organizations often have experienced professionals who understand the unique needs and challenges faced by immigrants and can offer tailored support. They might offer workshops on resume writing, interview skills, and workplace culture. Additionally, they can provide guidance on licensing requirements, credential evaluation, and navigating the local job market.

- **Immigrant Employment Agencies:** Immigrant employment agencies specialize in assisting international students and immigrants with their job search and career development. These agencies have expertise in understanding the specific challenges faced by international students, and they can provide individualized guidance and resources. They may offer services such as job matching, resume assistance, interview preparation, and networking opportunities. Immigrant employment agencies can also have established relationships with local employers who are open to hiring international talent.

Post-Secondary Institution Examples

1. **University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO)**: University of British Columbia Okanagan's Study and Stay Services provides support for international students as they navigate immigration pathways, policies, and processes while applying for Permanent Residence. UBCO's Global Pathways Career Program provides career advising, job search supports, and co-op education opportunities for international students.

2. **University of British Columbia Vancouver (UBC)**: University of British Columbia Vancouver campus provides access to a Pathways to Permanent Residency Canvas course and a tutorial on how to hire a private authorized immigration representative.

3. **Wilfred Laurier University (WLU):** Wilfred Laurier University has a webpage containing extensive information about applying for Permanent Residency after Graduation.

4. **University of Toronto (U of T)**: University of Toronto has a webpage dedicated for international students seeking Permanent Residency.

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International Student Support Checklist

Pre-Arrival:

- ✓ Develop and distribute a comprehensive pre-arrival information guide.
- ✓ Provide visa and immigration assistance, including step-by-step application guides.
- ✓ Schedule interactive online orientation sessions about campus life and local culture.
- ✓ Make arrangements for airport reception and transportation to accommodation.
- ✓ Offer housing support and guidance, including options and securing accommodation.
- ✓ Produce resources for cultural adjustment and managing expectations.
- ✓ Share financial aid, scholarships, and funding opportunities information.
- ✓ Explain health insurance options and plan navigation.
- ✓ Provide an enrolment checklist covering necessary documents, student ID card acquisition, and course registration.

Immigration:

- ✓ Conduct informative workshops regarding visa status, work rights, and post-graduation options.
- ✓ Provide updates on any changes to immigration policies that might affect students.
- ✓ Ensure legal aid and support services are known and accessible.

Arrival:

- ✓ Organize a warm welcome event for international students.
- ✓ Conduct a thorough campus and local community tour.
- ✓ Hold orientation sessions outlining academic procedures and campus resources.
- ✓ Assist with academic registration and course enrolment.
- ✓ Give guidance on setting up a local bank account.
- ✓ Provide information and assistance with mobile phone setup and service options.

Orientation:

- ✓ Administer initial academic advising sessions to discuss academic pathways.
- ✓ Introduce available language support services and enrolment procedures.
- ✓ Promote student mentorship programs for peer guidance.
- ✓ Introduce students to health and wellness services on campus.
- ✓ Schedule a series of social events for effective social integration.

Social and Cultural Engagement:

- ✓ Facilitate cultural exchange events and global educational programs.
- ✓ Actively involve students in diverse student clubs and societies.
- ✓ Make sports and recreational facilities available and easily accessible.
- ✓ Provide a range of volunteer and community engagement initiatives.
- ✓ Share a comprehensive calendar of campus events and encourage participation.

Academic Support:

- ✓ Ensure ongoing access to academic advising throughout the student's course of study.
- ✓ Conduct regular study skills and language support workshops.
- ✓ Advertise opportunities for research and academic engagement outside the classroom.
- ✓ Promote the use of tutoring services and learning centers.
- ✓ Encourage participation in specialized programs that offer international or research opportunities.

Mental Health and Well-being:

- ✓ Offer accessible mental health support and counseling services.
- ✓ Continue to assist with navigation of the health insurance and local healthcare system.
- ✓ Make fitness and wellness programs available to promote physical health.
- ✓ Advertise support groups and other student resources dedicated to overall wellness.

Career and Professional Development:

- ✓ Tailor career counseling services to address the unique needs of international students.
- ✓ Hold career development workshops covering essential skills like resume writing, interviewing, and job search strategies.
- ✓ Disseminate information on internships, on-campus employment opportunities, and job fairs.
- ✓ Organize networking events with professionals and industry experts.
- ✓ Facilitate connections with alumni for ongoing support and mentorship.

Preparation for Graduation:

- ✓ Intensify job search and career transition support as graduation approaches.
- ✓ Provide continued guidance regarding work visas and post-graduation immigration options.
- ✓ Introduce graduating students to alumni association and detail its benefits.
- ✓ Gather feedback on the international student experience through exit interviews or surveys.

Post-Graduation:

- ✓ Develop strategies to engage graduates with the alumni network.
- ✓ Offer continued access to career development resources to support professional growth.
- ✓ Communicate opportunities for further education, professional development, and potential discounts for alumni.
- ✓ Invite alumni to participate in campus events as guest speakers or mentors.
- ✓ Provide information on lifelong learning options and alumni events.

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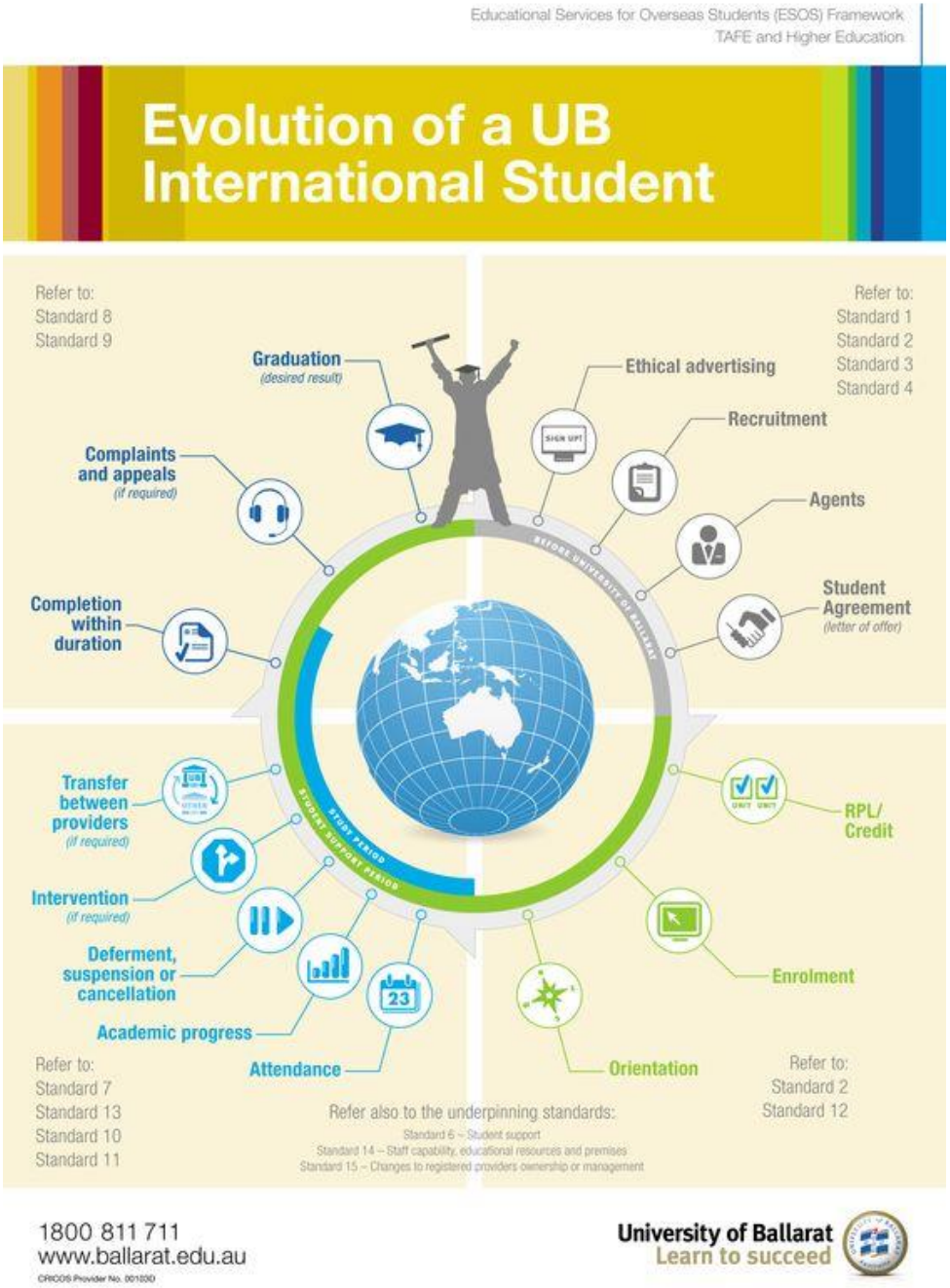
Appendix 1 – Sample Image for Student Life Cycle

This is an example diagram that the consultant team has thought does a good job of addressing some of the key issues we have identified as part of our work on this project. As noted in previous discussions, this is a diagram that could be developed in the future with BCCIE staff, specific to the BC context and framework. Additionally, as this diagram is mapped to specific standards, depending on the creation of the BC International Education Framework, this could be something explored as a mapping tool.