



Ministry of  
Post-Secondary Education  
and Future Skills

# **International Education Strategic Plan Guidelines**

## **for British Columbia public post-secondary institutions**

**June 2024**

## **International Education Strategic Plan Guidelines**

This Guidelines document is intended to support a common and consistent approach to the development of International Education Strategic Plans at public post-secondary institutions, to advance the benefits of international education and address challenges and risks.

### **Contacts**

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**Guidelines for Public Post-Secondary Institutions’  
International Education Strategic Plans**

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## OVERVIEW

International education contributes to the educational, cultural, and economic development of British Columbia. It benefits student learning and growth, contributes to local access and affordability, and links institutions and communities across the province to the global knowledge economy.

International students are attracted to British Columbia for its reputation as a high-quality study destination with safe, diverse communities, and a strong economy. Increased growth and significant changes in international enrolment in recent years have brought benefits but have also created challenges in the post-secondary system.

Government's priority is to ensure a well-managed, balanced international education system that maintains and enhances the benefits of international education and addresses the pressures, challenges, and risks.

The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (the Ministry) has been reviewing post-secondary international education in British Columbia and has developed a framework for international education to address the challenges and support better international education outcomes.

Government's objective is a balanced approach to international education that delivers positive education outcomes for international students and global opportunities for domestic students, underpinned by a commitment to quality education.

Key priorities include:

- Ensuring a quality education for all students.
- Addressing risks from threats to system integrity and market conduct.
- Source country diversification.
- Enrolment management to ensure balance at institution and program levels.
- Accountability for both international and domestic student experience and integration.

British Columbia is also responding to the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, responsible for issuing study permits, recently announced measures to stabilize the number of international students in Canada.

### Purpose of Institutional International Education Strategic Plans

A key action under the international education framework is for all British Columbia public post-secondary institutions to develop and implement International Education Strategic Plans that set out the institution's roadmap for enhancing the benefits of international education and managing the associated pressures, challenges, and risks in alignment with government priorities.

International Education Strategic Plans are expected to be forward-looking plans over three to five years that will enable institutions to set out a balanced approach to international education that delivers positive education outcomes for international students and global opportunities for domestic students.

International Education Strategic Plans will help institutions to:

- Connect internationalization to the institution's overall mission, vision, values, and strategy.
- Advance key priorities in the Provincial international education framework, including a focus on education quality, source country diversification, supporting system integrity through compliance and agent management, enrolment management, support services that meet students' needs, and ensuring positive education outcomes for all students.
- Identify opportunities for international partnership development and international collaboration to support the institution's diversification, outbound mobility for domestic students, academic research partnership development, and global collaboration and international development initiatives.
- Ensure international education programs align with the institution's response to the Calls to Action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, as well as equity, antiracism and diversity initiatives, and the development of intercultural competencies.
- Support a positive contribution to British Columbia's reputation for international education.

## Purpose of this Guidelines document

This Guidelines document is intended to support a common and consistent approach to the development of International Education Strategic Plans at public post-secondary institutions to advance the benefits of international education and address challenges and risks.

This Guide is intended to inform institutions with a current International Education Strategic Plan and to assist institutions that will be developing one. While allowing for institutions to develop their own unique approach to suit their institution and community, this Guide recommends core elements that the Ministry expects should be included in each institution's current and future International Education Strategic Plans.

British Columbia's international education priorities include balanced student numbers, effective student supports, a positive educational experience, and fair treatment.

As such, institutions' International Education Strategic Plans are expected to include, but are not limited to, information on the following:

- A plan to manage enrolment within targets the institution defines. In general, international student enrolment should not exceed 30% of a public institution's total enrolment<sup>1</sup>.
  - This includes plans to manage future recruitment within sustainable levels.
- Identification of diverse source countries and future recruitment plans.
- Provision of the information, services, and supports students need, and ensuring capacity of appropriate services.
- Agent management and oversight.

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<sup>1</sup> International student enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment will be calculated with Student Transitions Project Headcount Academic Year data. Academic Year is from September 1 to August 31. Data exclude offshore students. At Colleges, Institutes and Teaching-Intensive Universities, international students include students who have paid an international fee for at least one course in the period. At Research-Intensive Universities, international students are defined as those who have obtained a visa of some kind (student visa, work permit, diplomatic visa, or minister's permit). Students whose status was not identified are included with domestic students.

The Guide is not intended to be prescriptive, and there is no specific template that must be used. This Guide is intended to establish the context for the International Education Strategic Plans and set out the main components that should be included.

Additional information is included in the Recommended Content section of this Guide.

## Intended Audiences

The International Education Strategic Plan is a public document that is designed for two audiences:

1. The general public:
  - The International Education Strategic Plan must be clear, easy to read, and convey information in a concise, stand-alone document.
  - Potential readers may include domestic and international students, parents/families, educators, post-secondary institutions, education sector organizations, other government organizations, media, and general citizens.
2. The ministry responsible for public post-secondary education, including the Minister:
  - The International Education Strategic Plan must provide a clear sense of the link between government's international education priorities and challenges and the institution's plans to align with and address them.

## Reporting Timelines

- Institutions should provide their International Education Strategic Plan to the Ministry upon completion, and annually by March 31 to identify revisions or updates. Submit plans to: [psfs.internationaleducation@gov.bc.ca](mailto:psfs.internationaleducation@gov.bc.ca).

# GUIDELINES

## Recommended Content

International Education Strategic Plans should include the following content:

1. **President's Accountability Statement:** An Accountability Statement signed by the President to show senior executive endorsement of the Plan.
2. **Current State:** High-level description of the institution's international education mandate and operations, including:
  - *Background context:*
    - Information on the institution's history/experience with international education.
  - *Current state of international education:*
    - Key programs enrolling international students.
    - Key services and supports for international students, including any data on their uptake.
  - *Opportunities and Challenges:*
    - Discussion of trends, risks, and opportunities that are driving strategic direction or could impact institution performance.

### 3. Strategic Direction and Planning:

- Discuss the operating environment and strategic direction for the institution's international education plans and programs over the coming three-to-five years, within the context of federal and provincial government policy and priorities. This should include:
  - Identification of the institution's goals and objectives for its international education program, including alignment with provincial goals and priorities.
  - Discussion of alignment with the institution's strategic plan, Indigenous post-secondary strategic planning, and response to Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
  - Discussion of alignment with government's objective of a balanced approach to international education that delivers positive education outcomes for international students and global opportunities for domestic students, underpinned by a commitment to quality education.
  - Optimize screening of international students to ensure high-quality applications for successful study permit application.
- Describe the institution's specific plans to align with government's international education priorities and objectives (both federal and provincial). Specific considerations should include the following:
  - **Enrolment management:**
    - Description of how the institution is managing enrolment levels (number of students), at both the institution and program levels, to ensure enrolment levels reflect:
      - no more than 30% headcount<sup>2</sup>.
      - balance of domestic and international students.
      - no displacement of Indigenous and other domestic students.
      - domestic and international students accessing the courses they need.
    - Describe measures to optimize screening of international student applicants for efficient and effective allocation of Provincial Attestation Letters, including:
      - Consideration of financial resources.
      - Measures to assess/ensure high commitment level from students.
      - Consideration of source-country diversity.
    - Mechanism to monitor, identify, and address concerns regarding enrolment levels, including the potential displacement of Indigenous and other domestic students at the institution, in programs and in courses.
    - Projected international enrolment at the institution over the period covered by the strategic plan.
  - **Diversification:**
    - The institution's strategy for managing diversification of international student recruitment markets.
    - Information on active international partnerships, agreements, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), etc. (including any current or planned partnerships for joint degree programs and overseas program delivery).
    - Description of institutional efforts to promote the equitable access to outbound international education opportunities by Indigenous and underrepresented domestic students.

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<sup>2</sup> Student Transitions Project data will be used to evaluate enrolment levels.

- **Provision of information, services, and supports.**
  - Description of the information, services, and supports delivered by the institution, from provision of pre-enrolment and orientation information, to ongoing integration supports and services and their uptake, to post-graduation transition supports.
  - Institutional steps to understand and address the distinct needs of different international student groups, and those at different stages of their studies (i.e., undergraduate, graduate).
  - Description of plans for monitoring the match between international student enrolment levels and student needs, including mental health supports.
  - The alignment between international education and intercultural teaching, learning, and student support services.
  - International student orientation including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices including skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.
  - Description of capacity considerations, such as:
    - Student support services, mental health, and housing-related services.
    - The institution's capacity to accommodate and support all students.
    - The local communities' ability to support housing affordability and availability, diversity, employment, etc.
  - Development and management of a system that provides transparent tuition fees for the standard duration of a student's study program, including any expected increases in tuition.
- **Agent management and oversight:**

Institutions are accountable for the agents, sub-agents, and recruiters working on their behalf. Institutions are responsible for all representations made by agents, sub-agents, and recruiters to both prospective and enrolled students. Institutions must only work with reputable agents, sub-agents, and recruiters. The Strategic Plan will include:

  - Descriptions of agent management plans to ensure ethical student recruitment practices and a positive education experience focused on quality and integrity.
    - This may include, for example, implementation of an agent verification process; development, enhancement, and regular review of written contracts; agent training and information sharing; a robust and active process to monitor, discipline, and terminate agents; transparency of relationships with agencies.
- **Performance:**

Institutions are encouraged to develop key indicators relevant to their institution's goals and objectives and to provide a measure of progress and success towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Institutions may wish to consider resources like the [Guide for Developing Relevant Key Performance Indicators for Public Sector Reporting](#) developed by the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia.



4. **Appendices:** Include relevant information and data as appendices, such as:
- Various breakdowns of enrolment data such as by program, by country of origin, and change over time.
  - Information on outgoing mobility of British Columbia students, global Indigenous connections, and academic and research partnership development and collaboration globally.
  - Data on active MOU and partnership agreements with international institutions.