



Workshop 11 International Universities - Are they right for you?

Student Summary

This workshop will seek to provide you with the following:

- How to identify the 'right' school.
- An overview of available international universities.
- An overview of 'top tier' institutions for various fields of study.
- The general academic and financial requirements to pursue training.
- Strategies for maximizing chances of admission.

At the end of this workshop you will take with you:

1. Student handout outlining school selection process.
2. Student handout outlining Top Tier institutions in Canada for specific areas of training.
3. Student handout outlining strategies for maximizing chances of admission.
4. Resource list for further research.



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Introduction

If you are in this workshop you have been thinking about an international education and wondering if it is right for you and how to prepare.

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- Resource list for further research.

Setting the Context

There will be lots of info presented, as well as opportunities to work on your own, with a partner and in groups. We will try to break this down into three parts:

- a) Discussion about why you want to go abroad.
- b) Are you ready to do it?
- c) How do you do it?

For Canadians, higher education is considered **the ticket to future success** because a university education translates into new skills, better prospects and higher salaries.

- A university graduate earns about **75% more** than a high school graduate.
- The unemployment rate for those with only a high school education is **almost double** the national average (Statistics Canada).
- A bachelor's degree can be worth as much as **\$329,000** in extra lifetime earnings!
- There is also evidence that people with international education and experience are often paid higher at an entry level.



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Now, and even more in the future, a post-secondary education—a university degree, college diploma or some combination of the two—will help you get a great job. University also prepares you for the challenges you will face throughout your life. Going to university will help you learn how to solve problems, think critically and creatively, present your ideas persuasively, work in teams, and make effective decisions. With the global nature of our economy growing every day, new pressures and demands for cultural awareness, multiple languages, and a global perspective are becoming more and more in demand. International experience and education can help you develop these skills.

Regardless of the program, a degree that is globally recognized can help you to work in Canada and also the world. Ultimately, a university education can lead to success in your career and in life.

So why do you want to go overseas?

Let's explore your reasons.

There are more than 92 universities and colleges in Canada and thousands worldwide. Most educational requirements can be met here, but there are definitely advantages to going overseas. The question is why do you want to go overseas?

- Is it because your friends are travelling or have?
- Do you feel there is a better education for you in another country?
- Is there a specific field you are interested in that you can gain much valued and needed experience in that country?

What is your reason?

Exploring international education and work experience is about looking at yourself, your career and what you need to be and feel successful. International experience has a lot to offer, but there are a lot of unknowns: different cultures, languages, displacement, requirements to be self-sufficient, taxation issues, costs, and increased competition that should be explored as they apply to you. You need to know what's right for you.

Questions to ask

Ask yourself these questions:

- 1) What do I want to gain or obtain through international experience?
- 2) Is this the only way I can get these things?
- 3) What things are important to me, such as family, living style, friends, activities and others. Will I be able to have my needs met overseas?
- 4) Am I ready to be self-sufficient?
- 5) Am I prepared to move to a new country and start over?
- 6) Do I have any health concerns that may impact my decision?
- 7) Am I flexible and patient?
- 8) Am I able to make new friends and contacts easily?



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- 9) Can I live without close contact to my family and friends?
- 10) Can I afford it?
- 11) Can I get what I want through a program that includes an international component but is not a total international degree.
- 12) What about recognition of my degree where I want to work?

Individually I would like you to think of these questions and make some short notes for each one. Are there any that concern you? Is there anything that frightens you? Remember, it is alright to be scared—change often does that. But what is really important is that you are emotionally, physically and financially ready. Think about your answers when we do some of the later activities to help you set goals and develop action plans to achieve them.

OH3 Reasons to Consider International Education

Choosing the right school or program is like buying a car: you want to get the best value for your dollar. You want to get a car you can afford and that works for you, with the right options.

Do you buy the first car you see? Of course not! You approach a purchase carefully, start early and look at lots of models before deciding. Some people like imports, some people like domestics—both have their good points and bad. People will also look at prestige and recognition in the car they drive, while others will look at the warranty, reliability, how they will use the car over the next 5 to 10 years, what is its future trade in value, and what will be the maintenance costs?

It's the same thing with choosing a school or program. Plan your entry to school well ahead of time. Take the time to look around and you'll be happier with your final decision.

In essence, you are **shopping** for an education, so you want to choose a university that will fit your unique personality, education goals and career and life needs. You have to think about a lot of things, but being a savvy consumer and making informed choices is a great start!

HO1 Choosing the Right School for You

This process involves collecting as much information as you can about each school and its programs, from various sources, before making your decision. It's a time consuming process, but well worth the effort.

- Identify what your education, career and life priorities are.
- Choose the universities you want to explore and research each one in detail.
- Talk to employers in your career area (use the ask Employers HO).
- Look at university ratings and graduate surveys.
- Take a look at the country, region, and city you want to go to school in.
- Think about immigration requirements.
- Consider the lifestyle, culture and other factors.
- Consider your financial abilities.



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- Think about transferability of your education to other careers, countries, and programs (is it recognized).
- Think about your overall experience and what you want to have such as services, athletic programs, clubs, an urban or rural setting, entertainment, and other things that will make your experience rewarding and memorable.

Also use the handout “questions to ask a university” to think about some of the things that may be important to you.

When choosing schools, it’s key to remember that there are no right or wrong decisions. You’re simply making the best choice for you **right now**, based on your current situation.

It is also key to **involve your family members** in this process, so they are as invested as you are in your education and they can offer you support and encouragement along the way.

You should also be open to getting assistance from high school guidance counsellors and university advisors. The more help and support you have, the better your chances of choosing the right school for you.

After reviewing all this info, and doing the research you will be ready to make your decision, based on what fits your needs

Are you ready to go?

In order for you to go overseas it has to be for the right reason, but you also have to be ready to go.

Activity Group

Individually, think about:

What are the traits, skills, and other factors that would signify someone is ready and able to study abroad? What are some of the challenges you may face in going overseas? What are your strengths? What are your supports and resources to help you? Are you able to handle those challenges and the change? What about financial resources? What about your personality?

Use your goal and research forms to take notes and get your information together. It is important that you figure out if you are ready, or if not, how you will get ready. Check out some of the resources and find out what it takes to succeed and who does well overseas.

Article about what it takes to succeed overseas: http://www.destineducation.ca/pdfs/witwigo_e.pdf
This is a good overview to start with.

There are also some good international study/work experiences listed here:

http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canadaeuropa/youth/success_ca-en.asp



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OH5 People Who Do Well Overseas

OH 6 Short Student Experience Profile

So what do you think? Is this for you? Use your notes to develop your action steps. Build on your strengths and address your areas of concern/things that need to be completed in order for you to achieve your goals.

Sources

You want to start your search by **going to one-stop Web sites** or resources that will link you to many schools from one country or in one field, and then you can narrow down your search based on the priorities you identified.

Researching your Choices

You want to start your search by **going to one-stop Web sites** or resources that will link you to many schools from one country or in one field, and then you can narrow down your search based on the priorities you have identified. We have provided a list of top-tier universities from several geographic areas and some basic details or a Web site for you to check them out. Pick three of them to look at in more detail and then think about the one you really want to work on to complete the research questions. If the one you are interested is not there or you would like to research one that isn't, then use the research resources contained in your package as part of your first steps.

HO2- Top tier University Sample list

HO3 – International Education Research List

HO4 – University Ranking tools

Once you've found the schools you want to look at, you need to **know what to look for and what to ask**. The very detailed "Questions to Ask the Schools" handout can be used to research each school you're interested in and prioritize what you want in a school. These questions are a good source to start your research. The more details you have, the more informed your decision will be. Here you may not be able to answer all the questions on your own but focus on the ones you can, so that when you interview the school you can really focus on the questions that are important but can't be answered by you.

HO5– Questions to ask the school

Employers

HO6: Questions to Ask Employers

One of the reasons you want to attend university is to get a job in your field afterwards, so it's important to talk to employers, who will be the people evaluating your skills, the education and your overall experience after you graduate.



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First you should find out who the employers are in your career area and ask them for a bit of their time to answer some of your questions. You'll want to know what **qualifications** they look for, if the university you're researching has a good **reputation** and if they **hire or recognize graduates** from the school you're considering.

The "Questions to Ask Employers" lists a bunch of questions you can use to get details from employers and complete this step.

University Ratings

One of the other tools that can be of use is university ratings. University ratings are basically evaluation tools that rate schools according to a set criteria and then provide them with a relative ranking. Various groups such as magazines, associations, governments, private companies, and even student groups create the most popular university ratings. Internationally there are a number of ranking systems, however they tend to focus on the "popular" areas of study or those relating to their publication. We have provided you with a list of these resources to get you started. You can also check out your local university sites, they often have good information about international partners that can be of use to you.

Ratings can be helpful because they explore various areas of a university, not just academics, and they come out every year, so you're getting pretty fresh information.

However, it's important to remember that they're only one piece of the information puzzle and there are a lot of universities that don't get ranked especially in the fine arts and trades. **Remember you need to consider everything, not just rankings, when making decisions.**

Statistic: A 1997 survey of college freshmen reported that only 8.6 percent of college freshmen considered colleges' rankings in national magazines to be "very important" when selecting a college.

It's important to look at these rankings with a critical eye. For example, what does being "the best" school mean, when every student's version of the best is different?

So, use them as one of the tools, but not necessarily the primary source of information to help you make your decision. Take from them what you can, in terms of what applies to you!

Graduate Surveys

The last research activity involves looking into **graduate surveys**. They are collected by most universities as a way to find out where their graduates end up and how they're applying their studies in the workplace. They also include info on what past students thought of the program, which is helpful information for potential students.

They're worth looking into and most universities have this information available for potential students to review, you just have to ask for it. You often can find information from your country as well about international student experiences. **Check out local universities that your international school is**



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affiliated with and see if they have any data or feedback on the university from students who went there.

So those are all the steps and sources you need to explore combined with what you want, and whether you are ready, to identify the right school for you! Again, it is a time-consuming process, but university is a major investment of time, money and energy that you and your family will be making. Combine that with the fact that you will be potentially thousands of miles from home, in a different country with different ways of doing things, and risks – it is certain that you want to make the most informed choice possible.

Information about Degrees

Universities offer bachelor's, master's and doctoral (usually a PhD) degree programs in diverse subject areas like business, astronomy, genetics, social sciences and fine arts. These degrees can prepare you for various professions and careers, not just one specific career. University offers awesome opportunities for academic study.

Some countries also have colleges or schools that offer certifications that allow you to ladder into other degrees or to bring back that certificate and use it to increase your competitiveness to get into a program here in Canada or in another country.

Finally, there are also opportunities for you to go to school part of the time in Canada and part of the time overseas and have a degree recognized by both countries through their mutual agreements.

Undergraduate programs leading to a bachelor's degree generally require three or four years of full-time study, depending on the country. An honours or double major degree usually involves a higher level of achievement within the subject(s) and may require additional credits and time in a specific area of study.

There are thousands of schools worldwide with various specialties and differing levels of recognition and prestige. It is a big job to research and decide. There are also different requirements to fulfill a degree, and different schools view different courses at various levels of credit within a country, let alone internationally. **This is important should you transfer or seek to pursue post-graduate studies.**

OH 9 – Information about Degrees

Activity

Review and discuss some of the worldwide rankings.

OH7/8 Sample Rankings

These are just a sample, and provide the differences in ranking source perspectives.



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University Entry Information

The requirements to get into university differ from school to school and country to country, but these are the “**must have**” elements that you need to qualify for entry.

Requirements Include:

- General academic achievements: high school credits, specific courses and marks.
- Entrance exams and testing (such as SAT).
- Other specific requirements for your program. For example, fine arts or journalism students need to present a portfolio of work.
- Financial requirements: you’ll need to pay a processing fee to apply for entry, and you should have an idea how you’re going to pay for your studies.
- You may need to write a statement or essay about your interests, abilities and career plans.
- Language requirements.
- Citizenship or travel requirements.
- Family connections or affiliations.
- Other?

Important points to keep in mind:

- Getting into a university is **competitive** business: although you may meet a program’s requirements, students may not get accepted because there are more applicants than classroom spaces for most programs (acceptance rates can vary from 7% to 60% in most competitive institutions).
- Schools often choose students with the **highest marks** first and people with lower grades may not get in.
- Many times, you will be reviewed on **more than just your marks**. To choose well-rounded students, schools look at your extra-curricular activities or any volunteer or community work you’ve done, but don’t put your grades to the side for community work.
- Make sure you **read the fine print** carefully and know exactly what’s needed to get into the program and university you’re interested in. This is especially important with international applications.
- Find out what the **immigration** and other requirements of attending that university will be and get started on them as soon as possible.
- Can you **work** in that country?
- First year is often a time to try a variety of courses and then choose an area you want to specialize in. Be sure to find out the process for **switching majors** if you change your mind, as many students do after first year. In fact, about 60% of students change their majors at least once!
- Have a **plan B** in case you don’t get into the program you want.



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Activity

What could a plan B consist of?

As a group and with a partner brainstorm some of the areas you need to work on for your application. What will help you maximize your chances of admission?

What you'll need to apply:

- Application form and to meet application deadlines.
- An “official transcript” from your previous school: this is a list of your courses and marks. Each institution has a different process for students to get their transcripts, but you can often get transcripts from your province’s department of learning/ministry of education.
- You will also need to make certain that your transcript is acceptable and converted or relevant to their requirements. This may cost you to have it interpreted or rated.
- Your entrance exam scores.
- Some schools may require a medical form or reference letters.
- Funds to pay an application processing fee.
- Any travel documentation or preliminary approval.
- Testing or other requirements.

Activity

As a group and with a partner brainstorm some of the areas you need to work on for your application. What will help you maximize your chances of admission?

- Academic requirements
- Financial requirements
- Extra-curricular and other life activities

Examples: If you need to increase your marks, get a tutor. To round out your experiences, volunteer, to get more letters of reference, start talking to your allies and contacts.

Key Factors of Life in University

Once you’ve been accepted into university, there are a lot of factors to plan for your life in and outside of campus.

Some of these factors include:

- Paying for university
- Planning the trip over there



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- Getting all your final papers
- Packing and deciding what to take
- Preparing an emergency plan
- Supporting yourself financially and budgeting your money
- Choosing and registering for courses
- Socializing
- Housing
- Transportation
- Being a good student
- Staying connected
- Having fun while in university
- Understanding the culture
- Dealing with emergencies
- Getting support from friends and family while you're in university

Activity

Small group discussions facilitated by university graduates. After the workshop discuss this with family, friends and others who have gone overseas and consider the questions and your answers.

Next steps and closing

Here are some of the key points to remember:

- University can help you get a great job and prepare you for life in general.
- There are many universities and academic programs across Canada to choose from.
- Be as informed as you can when shopping around for a university.
- Choose a university that meets all your education, career and life priorities.
- Research universities in detail and get a number of opinions from employers, university ratings and graduate surveys.
- Be aware of the requirements to get into school and plan ahead to meet admission deadlines.
- Be aware of the country you want to study in, language and culture.
- Plan ahead to make sure you are able to meet all travel and immigration requirements.
- Prepare for all the details of university life.
- Involve your family in the university selection process, especially if they're going to help you pay for your education.

Next steps:

- Share this information with your parents and let them know what you're thinking about in terms of your university choices.



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- Review your priorities so you can make certain this is right for you.
- Think about whether you are ready for this.
- Review all the handouts.
- Begin doing your research, exploring the possibility of a university education and getting ready for the application process.
- Involve your allies.
- Don't forget about the small stuff that becomes big (money, arranging the visas, applications).

Remember the longest journeys start with one step!