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Photo: University of Toronto

## Canada's Value as a Place to Study

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Canada is renowned for its high-quality education system, and its universities are globally recognized for their academic excellence, diverse student population, and innovative research contributions. Canada holds a reputation of academic excellence, cultural diversity, and high quality of life. With over 200 public and private universities and colleges with a wide variety of fields of study, Canada offers the full package when it comes to post-secondary education. Per Times Higher Education, Canada only has one university that ranks in the top 25 worldwide, The University of Toronto at #21. Canadian universities are known for their support services and pathways to permanent residency for international students, resulting in many students opting to remain in the country after their studies. The country has a unique blend of city life and beautiful natural landscapes, which is an enticing feature for not only international students, but for Canadian citizens to move to a new province for their studies as well.

Canada is an attractive place to study for international students due to many factors. Canada has emerged as a premier destination for

international students seeking high-quality education, diverse cultural experiences, and a welcoming environment. With tuition being

slightly high yet affordable when compared to other countries like the USA, many international students flock to Canada's larger universities for graduate and undergraduate programs. However, recently international students are finding themselves in a tight spot with tuition spiking with the number of acceptances. In January 2024 the federal government announced a two-year cap on international student visas. The intention of the cap is to crack down on institutions that provide sub-par education and will give degrees and diplomas to international students who end up not being able to find work in their field. Additionally, the project aims to help the housing crisis that many Canadian and international students struggle to find affordable housing during their time of studies, and afterwards. The cap only applies to college and undergraduate programs. Post-secondary education is a provincial responsibility in Canada, and Ontario and British Columbia are vowing to "significantly increase quality standards in international education." (CBC News). Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Marc Miller stated, "We need to be doing our jobs and making sure that we have a system that actually makes sure people have a financial capability to come to Canada, that we're actually verifying offer letters." (CTV News). Even with the many scholarships and work-study programs that Canada offers, financial stress is an issue for many students.

Before the federal government announced the freeze and cap on international students, they were already preparing for challenges coming to Canada. Effective Jan. 1, Canada increased the cost-of-living financial requirement for international students, announced by Minister Miller. Originally, applicants had to show \$10,000 to cover tuition and living expenses, which has now been doubled to \$20,635. This rise will hopefully limit the number of students who move to Canada only to realize their funds are not adequate to keep up with the cost of living. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada predict that by 2027, Canada will be receiving 1.4 million international student applications per year (The Globe and Mail). The current framework and infrastructure set in place does

not allow it to be feasible to accept so many students to post-secondary institutions. Many argue that the housing and affordability crisis will not be fixed by placing limits on incoming international students and immigrants.

Meanwhile, individual universities are facing their own challenges. Queens University in Kingston, Ontario is in financial distress as bankruptcy rumours circle the nation. This comes as a surprise as Queens University is one of Canada's top and more prestigious universities, with costs higher than many other Canadian universities and colleges. Despite the high application number, the popular university is planning for a deficit of \$48 million this year, an improvement from the original projected \$60 million. Queen's University, like other Ontario universities, faced impact from the province's 10% tuition cut in 2019 and subsequent freeze. The university is responding to the crisis by implementing a hiring freeze and cutting classes, but Queen's provost Dr. Matthew Evans is not taking the matter lightly: "This is very, very serious. Queen's could cease to exist if we don't deal with this issue" (The Globe and Mail). Queens principal Patrick Deane later released a statement calming anxieties: "Let me be very clear that there is no risk that Queen's in any foreseeable future will close its doors" (CBC News). Nonetheless, the future of the university is unsure, and fears still remain among staff and students.

Quebec Universities are being confronted with their own problems regarding tuition fees. In late 2023 the Quebec government announced that tuition fees for out of province students would be increasing significantly. Out of province students makes up for a large part of enrolment at English universities like McGill and Concordia in Montreal, Quebec. The Coalition Avenir Québec government says the tuition changes will help "protect the French language and boost French universities" (The Montreal Gazette). Additionally, to help preserve the French language, a new policy has been proposed where 80 per cent of international students would be required to reach intermediate French proficiency by graduation- which is no easy feat.

There has been a myriad of backlash surrounding these new policies, including McGill and Concordia launching legal action against the government of Quebec as of February 23rd, 2024. Many argue that these new rules will scare off students from other provinces and countries, which will result in a drastic drop in revenue and limits diversity of the student population. It is viewed as a direct attack on English universities in the province in an attempt to further Quebec's sovereignty movement.

Canada's top 10 schools ranked are as follows via [Top 10 Universities in Canada Ranked | Student.com](#) :

1. McGill University
2. University of Toronto
3. University of British Columbia
4. University of Alberta
5. Université de Montréal
6. McMaster University
7. University of Waterloo
8. University of Western Ontario
9. University of Ottawa
10. University of Calgary

Canadian Universities welcome approximately 1.44 million full-time and part-time students annually. Only approx. 11% of Canadian students choose to go abroad for their studies, according to Canada's International Education Strategy (2019-2024).

Universities and colleges in Canada are funded through two main sources: government grants and individual user fees (tuition, etc), as opposed to countries like Germany where post-secondary institutions are fully funded from taxpayer's

money. Canada has seven universities with financial endowments over \$1 billion, with the University of Toronto leading at \$3.267 billion for the 2022-2023 academic year. UofT is also Canada's largest university by student population. Queens University is fifth on the list, which makes their large deficit even more interesting. Alumni donations can also make up a hefty part of university funding.

Canada stands out as an ideal destination for both Canadian and international students seeking a world-class education, diverse cultural experiences, and an exceptional quality of life. But, while Canada seems like the perfect combination of bustling cities, access to nature, diverse population and work opportunities, being a post-secondary student in Canada is not as easy as one may think. Financial and language barriers are just a few of the challenges that students face when considering applying to Canadian universities and colleges. That being said, whether pursuing undergraduate, graduate, or professional studies, Canada provides a welcoming and inclusive environment where students can achieve their academic and personal goals.

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