



Canadian Bureau for  
International Education

2022

# International Student Survey

Guide for participating institutions



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# Introduction

Thank you for participating in the seventh edition of the International Student Survey (ISS).

The survey findings provide unique and holistic insights into the international student experience at Canada's post-secondary institutions, from pre-arrival planning through study and post-graduate phases.

Since the inaugural edition of the International Student Survey in 2012, the number of student respondents and the scope of knowledge and trends illuminated through the dataset have grown immensely. The survey increasingly supports the international education sector's capacity to drive informed, innovative practices through increased understanding of the stories, motivations, and perceptions of the international students who choose to study in Canada.

In 2021, the international student survey offered insights of over 40,000 student respondents from 67 universities, colleges, and polytechnics across Canada. The survey is delivered every two years apart from 2020, which was postponed due to COVID-19. Findings of this survey are available in the report: [The Student Voice – National Results of the 2021 CBIE International Student Survey](#).

CBIE, as a member-serving organization, leads the coordination of the survey and shares the data with participating institutions. In turn, institutions can generate insights to better understand the experience of international students on their campus. The benchmarking report allows institutions to compare their performance to other similar institutions across Canada as well as the national average. As a participating institution, you will be contributing to building a robust longitudinal national dataset that can inform policy at provincial/territorial and federal levels.

This guide provides an overview of the survey, the procedures, and the timeline. It describes how CBIE supports institutions to conduct the survey in a standardized and safe way. This guide also includes all the necessary information and supporting documentation required to support an ethics review and/or other internal approval process, as required by your institution.

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## Survey at a Glance

- ✓ Uniquely Canadian, comprehensive, national, and bilingual in scope.
- ✓ Respondents include full degree/diploma/certificate-seeking international students enrolled in Canadian post-secondary institutions.
- ✓ Given the broad-based nature of participating institutions, representative of the Canadian post-secondary landscape, the ISS yields reliable and valid data across the sector.
- ✓ Participating institutions will receive the anonymized institutional and national datasets and their respective institutional profile and benchmarking report.

## Themes

- ✓ International Student Demographics
- ✓ Decision-Making and Pre-Arrival Activities
- ✓ Satisfaction of Institutional Support Services
- ✓ Academic Experience Satisfaction
- ✓ Classroom, Campus and Community Engagement and Connection
- ✓ Family, Housing, Work, and Finances
- ✓ Perceptions of Safety and Inclusion
- ✓ Post-Study Plans
- ✓ Overall Student Satisfaction

## Benefits

- ✓ Gain insight into the perceptions, motivations, plans, and experiences of your international students.
- ✓ Understand the point-in-time picture of international students across the country.
- ✓ Measure the progress of your strategic and operational objectives compared to a national standard.
- ✓ Contribute to building a robust longitudinal national dataset that can inform policy and decision-making at the institutional, provincial/territorial and federal levels.





# Overview of Survey Participation



## International Student Participation

The survey is designed to study international students' experiences in Canada. Therefore, only students enrolled in post-secondary institutions who are studying for their full degree/diploma in Canada should respond to the survey. This includes international students who are studying in Canada with a student study permit, visitor's visa, or undertaking research on a work permit. **International exchange students are not meant to be included in this survey sample.**

## Institutional Participation

This research would not be possible without the cooperation and assistance of the institutions that are participating in the survey. CBIE will be providing institutions with a standardized survey tool and thus will not include custom questions. Institutions participating in the survey are requested to undertake the following essential tasks which are outlined in the section on responsibilities below. To ensure that the survey can be distributed to international students this fall, CBIE recommends that institutions begin the approval process as soon as possible.

This [guide includes all the information required for the ethics review](#), if required by the institution.

## Participation Agreement

To become a participating institution in the 2023 iteration of the CBIE International Student Survey an institutional representative will need to submit the **2023 International Student Survey Participation Agreement**. The following information is required to complete the agreement:

- Contact information of the representative(s) at your institution who will be liaising with CBIE to deliver the survey.
- Total number of full-time equivalency (FTE) of student enrollments at your institution.
- Total number of international students (at all levels) currently enrolled in your institution (headcount).
- Total number of international students who are studying English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or French as a Second Language (FSL) at your institution with the intent of obtaining a degree or diploma or certificate (headcount).
- The size range (FTE) that you would like your institution to be benchmarked against.
- List all the names of the campuses that will be involved in this survey.
- Confirmation of any international students studying at offshore campuses will take part in the survey.
- Confirmation of any international students, who are studying entirely remotely, will take part in the survey.

Please note that a "save and continue" feature is available in the online participation agreement. **The deadline to submit the Participation Agreement to join the 2023 International Student Survey is April 26, 2023.**

## Participation Fee

The cost of participation in the 2023 International Student Survey is included in the annual CBIE membership fee.

Institutions that are not members of CBIE are also welcomed to participate in the survey. The fee to participate in the survey for non-members is \$5,500. **Learn how to become a CBIE member.**

# Roles and Responsibilities

## CBIE Responsibilities

- Provides the 2023 Guide for Participating Institutions that includes detailed information about the survey methodology and delivery.
- Manages the survey and designs the questionnaire with additional input from member institutions.
- Provides a social media toolkit to participating institutions, which includes targeted communications to encourage international students to take part in the survey.
- Assists institutions with their internal review processes, which may include an ethics review or other relevant internal due diligence.
- Responds to student queries about the survey.
- Collect, clean and analyze the survey responses.
- Circulate the anonymized institution-specific and national datasets and reports to all participating institutions.
- Publish a National Survey Report, recognizing participating institutions as contributors, for the benefit of the Canadian international education sector.
- Recognize participating institutions as contributors to the national survey and the National Survey Report.
- Retain the anonymized national dataset, in an aggregated format, for subsequent longitudinal research purposes.
- Ask permission from students to participate in future research projects.
- Communicate with five students who have been randomly selected in the draw and award their prize.

## Institutional Responsibilities

- Complete and submit the [2023 International Student Survey Participation Agreement](#).
- Reads through the 2023 ISS Guide for Participating Institutions, sent to institutions once the participation agreement has been submitted.
- Conduct an internal survey review through an ethics review or other relevant internal due diligence, as required by the institution.
- Launch the online survey with the custom link provided by CBIE.
- Promotes the survey via emails and social media to the international student population encouraging them to participate in the survey.



## Reports & Data

Post-survey, each participating institution will receive the following:

- Anonymized National Dataset
- Anonymized Institutional Dataset
- Institutional Profile
- Benchmarking Report
- National Survey Report



# Methodology

## CBIE Ethical Review

CBIE will receive an approval from the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) before launching the survey. This community-based Research Ethics Board (REB) services Canadian not-for-profit organizations, governments, independent consultants, community organizations, community researchers, and others that want to maximize the ethical conduct of their research. CREO's work aligns with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2, 2018).

## Institutional Ethical Reviews

Many institutions (universities, colleges, CEGEPs, and institutes) have institutional ethical review committees that research and data collection initiatives involving students. Typically, ethical review committees require an overview of the proposed research, a copy of any correspondence that will be distributed to students, and a copy of the questionnaire to be used in the research. CBIE offers assistance to institutions in meeting this requirement.

If an internal ethical review is required or advisable to complete this project at your institution, we highly recommend beginning this process as soon as possible to ensure the survey can be launched at the beginning of October 2023.

## Supporting Documents



To support your internal approval processes the documents listed below are all available online. These documents are password protected.

Use the following credentials to access the supporting documentation.

### 2023 ISS Supporting Documents

[cbie.ca/2023-iss-supporting-documents/](https://cbie.ca/2023-iss-supporting-documents/)

Password: 2023-ISS

- Sample cover letter describing the proposed research, designed to be distributed to ethics committees
- CREO ethics approval letter
- Request for ethical review, submitted to CREO, which includes all the survey details
- A semi-final version of the questionnaire that will be sent to students
- Email templates informing students about the survey and inviting/reminding them to complete the questionnaire



## Sampling

The survey is being administered to a large sample of international students at several Canadian universities, colleges, and institutes. Since the survey is designed to study international students' experiences in Canada, only students enrolled in post-secondary institutions who are pursuing a full degree program in Canada should respond to the survey.

This includes international students who are studying in Canada with a student study permit, visitor's visa, or undertaking research on a work permit. **Please note that international exchange students, who are not pursuing a full degree program in Canada, are not meant to be included in this sample.**

## Online survey tool

CBIE is using its professional account with Alchemer to gather responses from students at participating institutions. The web-based methodology is designed to reach a large sample of international students. Institutions are being asked to send survey invites to their entire international student population. We have included a question in the survey to determine what type of student is responding (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, professional, ESL, etc.).

## Survey distribution

CBIE provides institutions with a generic survey link that can be embedded in the email to students.

The institutions will be responsible for emailing their sample of students. Each institution will be responsible for sending reminder emails to all students in the sample after sending the initial email invitations. We have included a recommended time frame for communications as well as sample reminder emails that can be used.

## Survey promotion

The communications templates provided by CBIE can be customized with the institutions' logos and/or electronic signatures. These features may help students to understand that the survey is genuine; however, some students' email programs may not display embedded graphics, rich text formatting, or HTML formatting properly. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that the emails are formatted in such a manner that they will pass the spam filters of your institution. We recommend that you avoid using rich text, heavy images or graphics in your email invitation.

In some instances, institutions' email servers block emails that contain a link to an external web address. Please check with your IT department to ensure that your email server's configuration will not block students from accessing the Alchemer URL, although we do not anticipate any problems with this.





## Secure Data Transmission

Alchemer offers Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption, which works through a cryptographic system to ensure a secure connection between the client (student) and the server (where the responses are saved). SSL is commonly used for online banking sites to transmit secure information. A link with SSL encryption shows the 's' in the 'HTTP' address. Alchemer complies with Canadian privacy (all data resides on Canadian servers) and accessibility standards (W3C).

## Social Media Toolkit

To assist institutions with their outreach and marketing directed at international students, CBIE will provide a Social Media Toolkit, which will be available as of January 2023.

The toolkit will be organized chronologically for the surveying period. It will include email templates, social media posts for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as well as direct messaging for apps such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Participating institutions can customize the communications according to their branding requirements.



## Prizes

To encourage students to participate in the survey, CBIE is offering five prizes of \$ 1,000. Winners will be randomly selected from the pool of international students who complete the survey.

To be eligible, students must complete the survey, agree to participate in the draw and give permission to CBIE to contact them if they are one of the winners. CBIE will communicate directly with the winners via email to award the prizes. If students agree to share the news with their institution, we will do so via our contact at your institution.

Institutions can further incentivize the survey specifically for their respective student population. In this instance, institutions will need to notify their students, accordingly, select the winners and coordinate the prize logistics.

Each student who completes the survey will receive a confirmation email that can be used as proof of having completed the survey (i.e. students can forward it to a specific inbox at the institution).

# Survey Timeline

Activities	Dates
• ISS Call for Participation opens.	<i>November 2022</i>
• CBIE circulates the ISS Guide to participating institutions, which will include the survey questions and communication templates destined for international students.	<i>January 2023</i>
• CBIE sends the Social Media Toolkit to participating institutions.	<i>January 2023</i>
• Deadline for institutions to confirm participation via Participation Agreement.	<i>April 2023</i>
• Institutions complete their internal ethics review and/or approval process, as required.	<i>January-September 2023</i>
• Institutions launch the online survey with the link provided by CBIE.	<i>October 4, 2023</i>
• Survey closes for all participating institutions.	<i>November 29, 2023</i>
• Anonymized survey results circulated to participating institutions.	<i>April/May 2024</i>
• CBIE launches the national survey report.	<i>June 2024</i>





# Frequently Asked Questions

## **How much does it cost for my institution to participate in the survey?**

The cost of participation in the 2023 International Student Survey is included in the CBIE membership fee. Institutions that are non-members of CBIE are also welcome to participate in the survey. The cost to participate in the survey is \$5,500.

## **Can I add custom questions to the survey for my students?**

No, this year we will be providing institutions with a standardized survey tool.

## **Can I obtain data from previous years?**

If your institution has participated in the survey in the past, you are able to access the data from 2018 onwards. Contact [learning@cbie.ca](mailto:learning@cbie.ca) to learn more.

## **When should I launch the ethics review process?**

Institutions should start their ethics review process as soon as possible to ensure the survey can be launched at the beginning of October 2023.

## **Which students should I send this survey to?**

The survey is designed to study international students' experiences in Canada. Therefore, only students enrolled in post-secondary institutions who are studying for their full degree/diploma in Canada should respond to the survey. This includes international students who are studying in Canada with a student study permit, visitor's visa, or undertaking research on a work permit. International exchange students are not meant to be included in this survey sample.

## **I'd like to include an identifier in the survey of my students. Must it be anonymous?**

We have worked with institutions to include identifying information (student numbers, names, email addresses) for their own student sample. This information is never shared with other institutions nor beyond the research team at CBIE. If you would like to take this approach, please contact us to determine a suitable methodology.





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## Contact us for more information

**CBIE appreciates your help and cooperation in following the procedures and meeting the timelines outlined in this guide.**

Your assistance will help us meet the final project completion schedule so that we can make the survey findings available to your institution as early as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, procedures and timelines, contact [learning@cbie.ca](mailto:learning@cbie.ca).



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