



## Request for Ethical Review Application Information for Participating Institutions

Please note that [Community Research Ethics Office \(CREO\)](http://communityresearchethics.com/creo-services/) has approved the information included in the application below. CREO's ethics review process can be found at: [communityresearchethics.com/creo-services/](http://communityresearchethics.com/creo-services/)

Any additions/revisions to the survey or recruitment tools requested by participating institutions (i.e. to collect additional participant identifiers, or add their own incentives/prizes) would need to be reviewed and approved by the respective institution's Research Ethics Board (REB) prior to beginning recruitment of participants.

The information included in the application can be used to complete your respective institutional ethics application, if required. It includes the following information:

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## Summary of Goal(s) and Rationale of the Research Project

Please provide a summary of the goal(s) and objective(s) of the project. Ensure that you clearly state your research question(s) and community benefits.

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) is a national, non-profit association facilitating Canada's participation in international education. Since 1966, CBIE has worked to advance education at all levels through the exchange of knowledge, perspectives, and expertise across borders and cultures ("global learning").

CBIE's pan-Canadian membership comprises 150+ colleges, institutes, universities, school boards, and language schools. It is the only national membership association that covers the full spectrum of Canadian education.

The CBIE International Student Survey (ISS) is a unique, national dataset that provides critical and holistic insights on the international student experience in 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.

The survey results will serve to:

- Inform policy and decision-making at provincial/territorial and federal levels.
- Provide Canadian institutions with insight into the perceptions, motivations, plans, and experiences of their own international students.
- Be a tool for Canadian institutions to measure the progress of their strategic and operational objectives compared to a national standard.
- Yield reliable and valid data across the sector.



## Research Partnerships

Please briefly identify any research partnerships and funding relationships. Describe if and how any commercial sponsors are involved.

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 and how it measures against institutional peers.

The cost of participation in the 2023 International Student is included in the annual CBIE membership fee. CBIE currently has several member institutions, which are listed on our website: <https://cbie.ca/member-community/members/>

Institutions that are non-members of CBIE are also welcome to participate in the survey. The cost to participate in the survey is \$5,500.00.

There is no commercial sponsorship involved in this research.

We anticipate that some provincial governments might mandate the survey to its provincial educational institutions and therefore would fund the participation fee for non-members. Participating institutions will be required to sign a memorandum of understanding with the government and CBIE, allowing the government to have access to their anonymized institutional dataset. Custom reports would be produced as requested, ensuring the anonymity of students.

Should other participating or non-participating stakeholders be interested in customized reports, CBIE does charge fees to produce such reports.

Although no official research collaborations have been established yet, it is possible in the future. Such partnerships would require a memorandum of understanding between CBIE and the interested stakeholders. Any research initiative would ensure the anonymity of participating institutions and students.



## Community Engagement

How is the community/study population involved in requesting, designing, implementing, or guiding the proposed project? Please be brief.

A Working Group, composed of 12 practitioners and researchers working in post-secondary institutions across Canada, was convened in 2021 to update and validate the survey tool. Working Group members work directly with international students, as do the institutional representatives who will lead this research in their institutions. These administrators are indirect beneficiaries of this project as they may use the data collected to implement programs and services to better support this population. We will be using the same survey tool for the 2023 iteration of the survey. In this latest iteration, new questions have been added regarding the study permit application. The “Work & Finance” section has been updated. The semi-final version of the questionnaire is available in our [supporting documents](#).

This research would not be possible without the cooperation and assistance of the participating institutions, who make the survey available to their international student populations. By taking part in the International Student Survey, participating institutions must agree to complete the following:

- Reads through the [survey terms of reference](#).
- Complete and submit the [ISS Participation Agreement](#).
- Conduct an internal review of the survey (through an ethics review process or other relevant internal due diligence process, as required by my institution), ensuring the institution's consent to participate in the national survey.
- Launch the online survey with the custom link provided by CBIE.
- Send promotions and reminders via emails and social media to the international student population, encouraging them to participate in the survey (CBIE to provide templates).
- Provide CBIE with information about the institution (size, location, student population) that can be coded in the survey tool (this will uphold the confidentiality of the institution).



## Summary of the Research Methodology and Procedures

Briefly list the method(s) and procedure(s) to be used in the project. Please explain how the study goals and objectives will be met by your approach.

The survey is being administered to a large sample of international students at several Canadian universities, colleges, and institutes. The survey will use a web-based methodology, which should minimize the reliance on participating institutions to support the survey and facilitate completion for international students. CBIE developed the survey using Alchemer, which has data centers in Canada. This is the seventh iteration of this survey. CBIE is managing the survey and is responsible for designing the methodology and questionnaire with additional input from member institutions. CBIE is committed to the following:

- Assisting institutions that require additional support to complete the internal review of the survey (through an ethics review process or other relevant internal due diligence process).
- Providing a promotional toolkit to participating institutions, which will assist them in delivering a targeted communications strategy to entice international students to take part in the survey.
- Responding to student queries about the survey.
- Collecting the data from participating institution's international student populations, who chose to participate in the survey.
- Communicating with students who have been randomly selected in the draw. To be entered into the draw, students will have fully completed the survey and opt-in to be contacted by CBIE if they are randomly chosen to win one of the prizes.
- Cleaning the data and circulating the anonymized institution-specific data as well as the anonymized national dataset, in an aggregated format, to all participating institutions.
- Analyzing the data and publish a National Survey Report presenting national data from the 2023 survey for the benefit and insight of the Canadian international education sector.
- Recognizing participating institutions as contributors to the national survey and the National Survey Report. (There shall be no institution-specific data/institutional).
- Retaining the anonymized national dataset in an aggregated format for subsequent longitudinal research purposes (25 years).
- Provide each participating institution with their respective Institutional Report, the Benchmarking Report and the National Survey Report. The anonymized institutional and national datasets will be available upon request.



## Participant Selection and Consent to Participate

- Who is the research population? Will there be participants who are under the age of 16, captive participants, or vulnerable participants? (See TCPS2 Article 4.7)

Participants of this survey are international students studying towards a full degree/diploma/certificate program in Canadian post-secondary institutions. International students include all students studying in Canada with a student study permit, visitor's visa, or undertaking research on a work permit. International exchange students will not be included in this survey sample. All students will be over the age of 16.

- How many participants are you seeking for each research method being used?

The number of participant international students depends on how many institutions decide to take part in the survey. In 2021 we had over 40,000 respondents. CBIE expects a similar response rate in 2023.

- How will you select your participants? (Attach outreach materials, posters, etc.)

CBIE provides each institution with a customized survey link. A representative from each participating institution (typically someone in the international office) will be responsible for communicating with their international student population. The institutional representative will need to embed the link into the invitation and reminder emails. Email templates are included in the Guide (see supporting documentation). The communication will go directly to all international students through the institution's regular communication channels.

We will add the following statement in the invitation and reminder email, which each institution will need to customize for their international student population:

*"You will be asked a number of questions regarding your experience as an international student on campus and in the extended community. If at any point during the survey you experience any discomforts, please note that we have the following services (institution can list below) to assist you at the (name of the institution)."*

The [promotional toolkit](#), available on the CBIE website is designed to assist participating institutions with the outreach and communications regarding the survey. The toolkit includes messaging and images specifically geared to international students, encouraging



them to complete the survey. Institutions can modify the survey email invitation and reminders to suit their branding and ethics requirements (i.e., institutional logo, electronic signature, institution-specific ethics statement, etc.).

- Will any deception or concealment be employed? If so, please indicate the nature of this and why it is necessary for the research. (Attach additional documentation if necessary)

No deception or concealment will be employed. The survey is entirely voluntary.

- How will your selection ensure inclusivity of potentially marginalized and/or vulnerable groups?

Participating institutions will send the survey link to their entire international student population. A social media toolkit will also be provided to assist participating institutions with their outreach. International student offices regularly communicate with all international students for academic advising and relay information about social activities. Each institution has methods for ensuring the entire student population is reachable. Methods to reach students may include email, social media, and direct messaging through apps.

- What is the process for acquiring free and informed consent from the participants, or from other people in cases where participants are unable to provide their own free and informed consent? Attach informed consent form and/or participant information letter. If there is no informed consent process, please explain why this is not necessary for the proposed project.

Students will be providing their consent by choosing to complete the online survey. In the email that goes to students with the survey link, they will be notified that participation implies consent (see details below).

- How will you ensure that consent is ongoing and that participants know that they are free to withdraw without consequence?

Participants are required to read and agree to the informed consent (online) before beginning the questionnaire. The section titled “Withdrawing from the survey” stipulates that participants can withdraw from the survey at any time by closing the browser. They can also request the removal of your data before November 30, 2023, by sending a request to [research-recherche@cbie.ca](mailto:research-recherche@cbie.ca). A copy of the consent form is available on our [website](#).



- How much time will participants be asked to give to the project?

The online questionnaire takes **approximately 30** minutes to complete.

### **Study Benefits:**

Describe study benefits and benefactors from the outcomes of the project:

1. Will the research participants benefit from the proposed project? How will they benefit?

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. Institutions will use the data to help make programming decisions and support available to international students. CBIE will use the data to support its advocacy efforts with provincial/territorial and federal governments concerning policymaking.

2. Will compensation (money/rewards) be offered to research participants? Please provide details.

To encourage students to participate in the survey, CBIE is offering three prizes of \$ 1,000. Winners will be randomly selected from the pool of 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. Participants can skip through the survey on a question-by-question basis by selecting the "prefer not to answer" option that has been included on all potentially sensitive questions. Partial surveys and duplicates will be automatically deleted.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents will be asked if they want to add their email to the draw for a chance to win \$1,000. If participants opt-in, they will be instructed to regularly verify their inbox (and spam/junk mail) between December 4 and 22, 2023, for an email from [research-recherche@cbie.ca](mailto:research-recherche@cbie.ca). The three winners must claim their prize within 14 days of the email notification and validate their identity. Email addresses will not be associated with any of the data provided in the questionnaire. Direct deposit information will be required to transfer the \$1,000 prize. The institutional representative will be copied on the message to validate the legitimacy of CBIE's communication and to ensure the email is not treated as spam or junk mail.

Institutions can further incentivize the survey specifically for their respective student population. In this instance, institutions must notify their students accordingly via their communications, select the winners and coordinate the prize logistics. At the end of the





questionnaire, respondents will be asked if they want to add their email to the draw for a chance to win an institutional prize. If they opt-in, their email address will be shared with the institutional representative. Email addresses will not be associated with any of the data provided in the questionnaire.

Students will receive an email, automatically generated from the surveying platform once they have completed the survey. It reads as follow:

*“We thank you for taking the time to complete the 2023 International Student Survey!*

*If you opted into the draw, you have a chance to win one of the five prizes of \$1,000, offered by CBIE. Please note that if your name is randomly selected, CBIE (learning@cbie.ca) will contact you via email after January 26th and no later than February 23rd, 2024.*

*Thank you once again and wishing you all the best in your future educational endeavours!*

*The CBIE Team*

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Board. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in our information, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Chair, Community Research Ethics Board, at: Community Research Ethics Office (Canada) Corp. c/o Centre for Community Based Research, 190 Westmount Road North, Waterloo ON N2L 3G5, Email: [creo@communitybasedresearch.ca](mailto:creo@communitybasedresearch.ca), Telephone: 1-888-411-2736”*

### 3. What potential benefits exist for the community/study population?

This survey results will benefit the institutions participating in the research and support the international education sector’s efforts to improve the overall experience of international students in Canada by informing policy decisions at provincial/territorial and federal levels. It will also provide participating institutions with insight into their own international students' perceptions, motivations, plans, and experiences, which may serve to improve policies, outreach, and services geared to international students.



## Risks and Harms

Please explain all potential risks to research participants and the community and explain how the risks will be resolved/minimized:

1. List possible risks to participants: physical, psychological, social, economic, etc.
  - Of the identified risks what is the probability and/or magnitude of harm?

CBIE has included a section on “Safety and Well-Being” in the survey. This section asks questions about their experience with connection to others, inclusion on campus, support systems, and experience with harassment and discrimination. The survey tool has been designed to ask about such topics indirectly and does not ask for details. There is a potential risk that participants will experience negative feelings if they have had difficult experiences, specifically with harassment and discrimination questions. However, these questions are essential to understand if there are ways to improve the experience and support needed for international students in this capacity.

2. What are the plans to mitigate potential risks, burdens, and harms?

In addition to providing information about national helplines for mental health, institutions can customize their outreach to students. The following message is included under the “Mental Health and Support Services” header in the email templates provided to participating institutions. This section of the email template reads as follow:

*"You will be asked a number of questions regarding your experience as an international student on campus and in the extended community. If at any point during the survey you experience any discomforts, please note that we have the following services (institution can list below) to assist you at the (name of the institution). "*

Participants can also exit the online survey at any time.

3. If vulnerable participants are included are additional appropriate protections included?

Not applicable.



## Privacy and Confidentiality

1. Who will be collecting the data? How will the data be collected? Attach survey, interview guide, etc.

Institutional representatives will send out the invitation and reminder emails to their international students. CBIE will not be contacting students directly. Emails will only be collected by CBIE, via the disclaimer on the first page of the survey, when students agree to participate in the survey. The Terms of Reference of the survey are included in the 2023 ISS Questionnaire, included as a supporting document for this application (see attached)

CBIE will collect the data from participating institution's international student populations who chose to participate in the online survey. The survey responses will be immediately accessible, but only to the CBIE research team.

CBIE uses its professional account with Alchemer to gather responses from students at participating institutions via an online questionnaire. 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. Finally, Alchemer is compliant with Canadian privacy (all data resides on Canadian servers) and accessibility standards (W3C).

2. Describe procedures for getting permission and using quotations; will participants approve them?

A survey questions specifically asks, “Do you allow CBIE or your institution to the advice/information you provided in the form of an anonymous quote?” Only positive responses to this question will provide access to the use of quotations.

- Who will have access to the research data? How will they access it?

Each participating institution will receive anonymized raw datasets. The email address of students will not be included in the anonymized dataset. Participating institutions



will receive the data from their own institution as well as the global responses dataset. The data will be sent from the CBIE research team directly to the lead contacts at each institution via email.

Each institution will also receive a summary report, which will serve as a benchmark against the national dataset. All participating institutions will receive an invitation to the National Report launch event. The launch event and report will offer an in-depth analysis of the survey findings.

CBIE will retain the anonymized national dataset in an aggregated format for subsequent longitudinal research purposes. CBIE keeps this data to observe changes in responses from year to year to identify trends.

## Data Security

1. If information about the participants is to be collected from other people, describe how this collecting will be done safely.

CBIE has taken precautions to ensure that students cannot be identified by their responses (with the exception as described in section 4 below). Through our survey tool, student data cannot be intercepted between the survey submission and the saving on Alchemer servers. Once data has been delivered to CBIE, the primary researcher will scrub the data set and remove all identifying information before performing any analysis.

The data will be stored digitally on a CBIE server located in the CBIE office in Ottawa (220 Laurier West, 15th floor). The data will be found in a password-protected folder to which the research team at CBIE will only have access.

Once the data is cleaned, the anonymized institution-specific data and aggregated/anonymized national dataset will be circulated to the lead contact at each participating institution.

2. Describe procedures for data handling in case of participants withdrawing from the study.

Incomplete surveys will be automatically removed from the dataset. Participants who complete the survey can contact [research-recherche@cbie.ca](mailto:research-recherche@cbie.ca) to request that their



data be permanently removed. This request needs to be submitted before the dataset is anonymized (before November 30, 2023). This will be actioned immediately by the research team.

CBIE's IT department will ensure that data stored on CBIE servers are permanently destroyed by deleting files from the network drive and permanently deleting data from the recycle bin.

3. Describe how you plan to provide feedback from this project to the participants and/or the community to which they belong. What are the plans for community engagement and action on the results of the study?

The CBIE researcher will analyze the data and publish a National Survey Report presenting national data from the 2023 survey for the benefit and insight of the Canadian international education sector (see [The Student Voice National Results of the 2021 CBIE International Student Survey](#)). We anticipate launching the 2023 report in June 2024. Participating institutions, CBIE members, government representatives, and other stakeholders will be invited to this event. Each year CBIE attends international education conferences in the US, Europe, Asia, and South America. This report will also form the basis of CBIE's conference participation.

Participating institutions will be recognized as contributors to the national survey and the National Survey Report. There shall be no institution-specific data or identifiable institutional data presented in this report. Data shall solely be reported in anonymized/aggregate form.

4. Will the data collected in this study be used for other studies or linked with other data? If yes, please explain.

Participating institutions will receive their respective Institutional Report, the Benchmarking Report as well as the National Survey Report. The anonymized institutional and national datasets will only be available upon request.

Researchers at the participating institutions may request access to the anonymized datasets to conduct further analysis and research. This additional research will fall outside of this project's scope and would require additional ethics approval by the institution.



CBIE will retain the anonymized national dataset in an aggregated format for subsequent longitudinal research purposes.

The anonymized data set will be kept for 25 years in a secure password-protected folder on the CBIE server. The data will only be accessible by CBIE's research team.