

ICEF INSIGHTS

The future of events / Virtual internships / Effective agent partnerships
China now / Instagram and website strategies / AND more

Restarting *mobility:*

International recruitment
in the age of COVID



FALL 2021

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SUCCESS STORY

Alumnus Diego Alejandro Ramos



Having worked as the brand manager of the second biggest alcohol company in his native Colombia for five years, **Diego Alejandro Ramos** wanted to advance his career. He chose the one-year **Marketing – Digital Engagement Strategy** graduate certificate program at Centennial College.

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“From content creation to understanding and using Google Ads and Google Analytics, the tools I received from Centennial prepared me for the challenge of starting my career and I took it on confidently,” he says. “**Centennial gave me the opportunity to be part of the Canadian workforce**, and without the College, I wouldn’t have reached my goals.”

Diego was hired by his co-op host before he even graduated. Since last May, he has been working as a digital content manager in Toronto, Canada.

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WELCOME

It's my pleasure to introduce you to a new issue of *ICEF Insights*, which we are publishing in the context of significant disruption and challenge due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. International travel restrictions as well as domestic COVID-containment protocols have changed how education is delivered, how students learn, how study abroad decisions are made, and how educators recruit across borders.

And yet, through it all, demand for study abroad has remained strong and is poised for further growth in the coming months and years. Students are considering more destinations, institutions, programmes, delivery models, and types of credential than ever. Educators and agents are providing programmes and services across online, blended, distance, and in-person modalities, as well as across time zones. Their work is creating unprecedented innovation.

The recovery of our industry will depend on government policies around border controls, work rights, visas, and emergency supports for pandemic-battered sectors. We must continue to band together in pressing our governments to craft policies that reflect how much is at stake not only for our industry, but also for economies and societies at large.

This issue is devoted to helping you discover and learn more about the trends, technologies, channels, and opportunities that exist right now for international recruitment. Understanding emerging technologies and platforms, as well as creating stronger relationships between educators and agents, has never been more urgent.

I have every confidence that our industry will survive and thrive once again. Students know the exceptional value of international experiences and exchange, and we will be here for them – online, in person, and wherever in-between.

Sincerely,

Markus Badde
CEO, ICEF





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A view from the Arts West building at the University of Melbourne. This remarkable student hub features dozens of learning spaces and is a showcase of the university's cultural collections. See page 18 for how the university has supported international students in need.



ABOVE AND BEYOND: GOOD GOES A LONG WAY

These institutions and organisations have done their utmost to help international students. Their actions won't be forgotten.



Quarantine is made less challenging when universities help to cover the costs.

1 MAKING QUARANTINE EASIER

The University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, pays for days 4–14 of international students' quarantine on its campus. Waterloo's associate vice-provost Chris Read says, "The cost is about CDN\$2,000 and includes transportation from the airport, accommodation, and food." Supports like these are one reason that even during the pandemic, the university has maintained its international student enrolments (8,861 in 2020–21 compared with 8,897 the previous year).

2 SWEET TREATS AND THERAPY PETS

At Marshall University in West Virginia, US, different faculties cooperated to deliver care packages that included Rice Krispies treats, candy, protein bars, cookies, crackers, and stress balls to quarantined students. But that wasn't all: staff ran errands for cooped-up students and brought in therapy animals to provide special comfort.

Tabby Collins, a biological sciences major, said, "The day that I met Juner [a therapy dog] was a pretty rough one ... Juner came right up to me and sat at my feet while I got to pet him. He helped to calm me down before two very important tests that I actually aced. I don't think I would have done as well on those tests [without] Juner. ... I'm very grateful that Bonnie [Bailey, director of student support services] is so willing to bring a therapy dog to help students."



At Marshall University, therapy dogs are integrated into campus life.



3 REUNITING SISTERS

In the early days of the pandemic at George School in Pennsylvania, US, co-director of admissions Kim Major learned that student Nadira Talayee, from Afghanistan, was missing her sisters, Rahila and Adela, who were studying elsewhere in the US. Major and her husband, Tim, drove hundreds of miles to reunite the sisters: first to New Hampshire to pick up Rahila, then to Maine for Adela.

“Kim and Tim drove us all the way from Pennsylvania to Bar Harbor, Maine. I really appreciate them,” Nadira says. “They drove from 6 am to 7 pm and made it possible for us to be together.” The sisters couldn’t travel back to Afghanistan because of the pandemic, but they were able to spend the summer together cooking their favourite Afghani dishes, running and cycling, and reading.



Staff at George School find ways to support international students feeling isolated.



International students have appreciated University of Limerick’s efforts to ease their anxiety in the pandemic.

5 PRACTICAL HELP AND A CARING APPROACH

At the beginning of the pandemic, international students everywhere were shocked and dismayed at the disruption to their dreams of studying abroad. Many had no idea what to do. At the University of Limerick in Ireland, student support workers were immediately deployed to help international students understand how to access financial assistance, healthcare, visa extensions, and more. Other initiatives helped students through isolation, including virtual tours, quiz nights, and Netflix movie nights. Neha Misri from India, studying for an MSc in human resource management, said, “I cannot thank UL enough for handling international students’ arrival with such warmth, love, and passion in these extraordinary times.”

4 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MENTORS

At the University of Newcastle in Australia, international students identified as strong academic performers have new roles mentoring students learning online in their home countries. The university has kept up email communications with every international student and directed them to whatever supports they need: mental, academic, or financial. Staff and students came together to donate clothing, toiletries, and food to international students in need.



The University of Newcastle connects international students across borders through a mentorship programme.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GEORGESCHOOL.ORG; WWW.NCL.AC.UK; EMMA DYER



University of Melbourne students are happy to help other students in need.



6 FOOD TO KEEP GOING

In Australia, the University of Melbourne partnered with charity Second Bite to offer free meal packs to combat food insecurity among students. The Student Fresh Box – designed to last a week – is packed with 5kg of locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables.

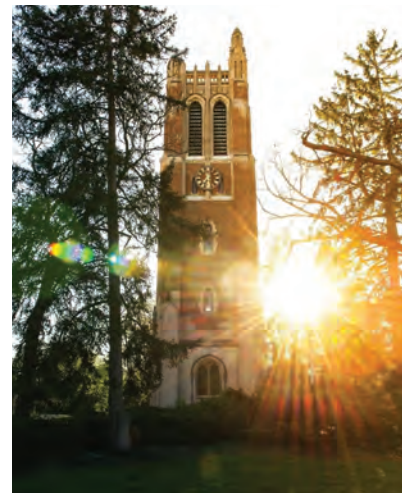
Similarly, Study Queensland and Study Gold Coast partnered with charity GIVIT and local supermarkets to launch a “Meals for Mates” grocery delivery system for international students in need. Students themselves hand out the packs and as you can see from the pictures, it’s a much-loved and appreciated programme.



Meals for Mates bags are packed and ready to go out with student volunteers.

7 REACHING OUT TO PARENTS

Early on in the pandemic, Michigan State University (US) held daily virtual office hours with Mandarin speakers for parents of the university’s Chinese students, who naturally wanted to hear that their children were being well supported during the pandemic. The university’s Office for International Students and Scholars ran several other programmes anticipating international students’ needs in this challenging time, from protecting them from any discrimination to helping them with employment and housing. Director Krista McCallum Beatty said, “The biggest thing that I’m doing as a director is talking to people and advocating to make sure that as the university is making decisions, they’re taking into consideration how a decision will affect international students.”



Michigan State University reached out virtually to parents of Chinese students in Mandarin to reassure them.



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MAGNETIC PULL: POST-STUDY WORK RIGHTS

A tour of opportunities on offer to international students who want to work or immigrate after graduating*

Canada

Visa class: Post-graduation Work Permit (PGWP)

Duration: 8–36 months

Minimum credential required: Diploma/certificate

Minimum study time: 8 months

Did you know? Student work experience counts towards permanent residency requirements.

US

Visa class: Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Duration: 12 months (up to 36 months for STEM students)

Minimum credential required: Certificate

Minimum study time: 12 months

Did you know? Employer-sponsored H1-B visas for workers in “specialty occupations” are valid for 3–6 years. H1-Bs are limited in number and can be difficult to obtain, especially for students not studying STEM.

France

Visa class: Temporary Residence Permit

Duration: 12 months (longer for some nationalities)

Minimum credential required: Professional bachelor’s/master’s degree

Minimum study time: 3 years

Did you know? Once students find a job, they can apply for a 4-year work permit. International graduates can work if they have a promise of employment that pays at least 1.5 times the minimum wage. A Talent Passport is available to researchers.

Netherlands

Visa class: Orientation Year Residence Permit

Duration: 12 months

Minimum credential required: Bachelor’s degree

Minimum study time: 10 months

Did you know? Graduates with this permit can work in any job while looking for full-time work. Once they find a job, they can apply for a 4-year EU Blue Card residence permit.

Germany

Visa class: Residence Permit

Duration: 18 months

Minimum credential required: Bachelor’s degree

Minimum study time: 3 years

Did you know? Graduates with this permit can work in any job while looking for full-time work related to their field of study. Once employed full time, they can apply for a 4-year EU Blue Card residence permit.



Ireland

Visa class: Third Level Graduate Scheme

Duration: 12–24 months

Minimum credential required: Level 8

Minimum study time: 12 months

Did you know? Designed for graduates to look for work or apply for a Green Card; Green Cards are awarded only when a job pays over €60,000/year, or is on a list of specified occupations, or pays over €30,000/year and will last at least 24 months.

UK

Visa class: UK Graduate Route

Duration: 24–36 months

Minimum credential required: Bachelor's degree

Minimum study time: 12 months

Did you know? UK Graduate Route opened in 2021; it has spurred demand for the UK among non-EU students, a needed trend as UK educators brace for some loss of EU students due to Brexit.

China

Visa class: Work Visa

Duration: 12 months

Minimum credential required: Master's degree

Minimum study time: 2 years

Did you know? To be eligible, students must graduate from Chinese institutions or “well-known universities overseas” with 80% or higher. Their job must be with a Chinese company, related to local skill demands, and linked to a specified salary range.

Australia

Visa class: Temporary Graduate Permit (Subclass 485)

Duration: 18–48 months

Minimum credential required:

Bachelor's degree

Minimum study time: 2 years

Did you know? There are 2 visa streams: Graduate Work Stream (18 months, for specific occupations) and Post-study Work Stream (2–4 years, for bachelor's and more advanced degree holders).

New Zealand

Visa Class: Post-study Work Visa

Duration: 12–36 months

Minimum credential required: Certificate

Minimum study time: 30 weeks

Did you know? Partners of international graduates holding this visa can apply for their own work visa; visa-holders' children can study fee-free as domestic students.

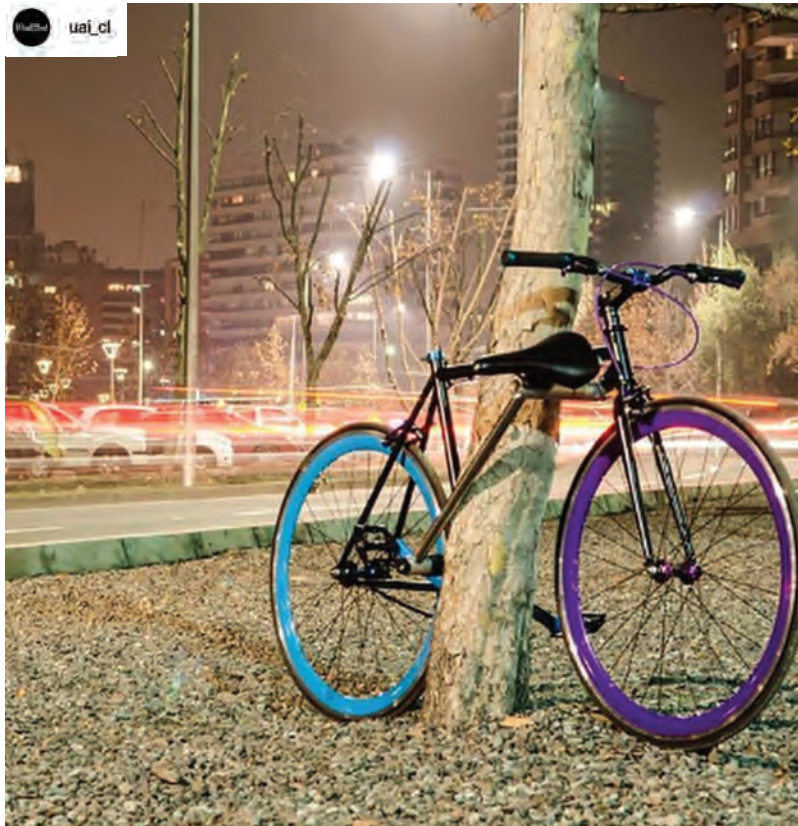
Research shows that many international students choose to study in particular destinations because there are opportunities for employment after graduation and even for permanent residency.

*Several of these countries have temporarily extended eligibility criteria because of the pandemic. Please check government websites for details.



TONE TRUMPS PERFECTION ON INSTAGRAM

Who doesn't want perfection in what we put into the world? But paradoxically, perfection can be the wrong goal for educators and agents on Instagram.



▲
Adolfo Ibáñez University in Chile staged this shot of its students' prize-winning bike invention for its Instagram. It's gorgeous and really highlights the "unstealable" feature of the bike (you have to break the bike to steal it).

STUDENTS WANT authenticity, humanity, and behind-the-scenes stories from the people and companies they follow on Instagram – including schools and universities. As Instagram influencer Ali Bonar told *Forbes* magazine, "I can instantly tell when a brand has outsourced to an agency and some poor intern is arranging beautiful stock photos." Another influencer, Arla Heidrich, says there's a balance to be struck:

"[photos] can't be too crappy or too staged, there's a sweet spot."

This isn't to say you shouldn't post beautiful, high-quality pictures. Just make them real: no stock photos, and avoid an overly corporate tone. Humour is effective if it serves a purpose (e.g., showing empathy for students' stress during exams), and emotion definitely plays a role (e.g., zooming in on an athlete's face after a triumphant game). Photos can be creatively edited, for example, to show your school in different seasons or times of day and night, using filters to subtly augment the effect if needed. Take care with image and video captions and with messaging in general: no typos, not too many hashtags, and judicious use of emojis.

Instagram is a powerful marketing channel, but it must be linked to brand strategy. Choose and edit photos carefully and with purpose – posting regularly is good but quality is more important than quantity. When students take time to react and comment, reward them quickly with thoughtful, grateful replies. All your care and strategic thinking will be worth it. And once you get rolling, it's a lot of fun!



◀ Who doesn't want to graduate like this? Italy's University of Bologna's Instagram feed is consistently stunning.

It's one thing to attend a top-ranked university, and quite another to be a student at a top-ranked university that looks like Monterrey Institute of Technology in Mexico does at night.



▲ Georgetown shows its love for students past and present in this post. The university's Instagram feed also features a beloved bulldog with legions of fans.

This post is truly beautiful. In France, Bordeaux Montaigne University students organised a street art auction, the proceeds of which went to support students who had lost their jobs because of covid-19. ▶





◀ Here's another brilliant graduation shot on the Instagram page of South Africa's Vaal University of Technology.

Research doesn't get cuter than this. What a perfect image to spotlight scientific excellence at Australian National University.

Instagrammers for China's Tsinghua University aren't about to let the beauty of their campus go uncelebrated.



▲ This image from Washington, US-based Georgetown's Instagram expresses an upbeat, "can-do" attitude towards exams. Note that the study sheet includes the name of the student who wrote it: no stock photos!

Looking for inspiration? Check out these Instagram feeds:

- Adolfo Ibáñez University in Chile (uai_cl) 28.6K followers
- Australian National University (ouranu) 30K followers
- Georgetown University in the US (georgetownuniversity) 96.7K followers
- Bordeaux Montaigne University in France (ubmontaigne) 7.7K followers
- University of Bologna in Italy (unibo) 93.9K followers
- Vaal University of Technology in South Africa (mavutifamily) 2.5K followers
- Tsinghua University in China (Tsinghua_uni) 59.9K followers
- Monterrey Institute of Technology (tecdemonterrey) in Mexico 113K followers



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Charting the crisis
that has changed
our world:
**A COVID
TIMELINE**



28 February
CASES / **84K**
DEATHS / **3K**

13 March
CASES / **142K**
DEATHS / **6K**

January 2020

- 4 /** WHO reports mysterious pneumonia in Wuhan, China
- 7 /** China reports infections are novel coronavirus
- 11 /** First death reported in China
- 20 /** China confirms human-to-human transmission of virus
- 25–31 /** Virus spreads / WHO declares global health emergency / China cancels all February standardised test sittings (GRE, GMAT, IELTS, TOEFL)

February 2020

Death toll from virus surpasses SARS deaths (2002–03) / Japan confirms cases on *Diamond Princess* cruise ship / WHO names virus “coronavirus disease 2019” – COVID-19 / Foreign institutions adjust application dates for Chinese students affected by travel restrictions



March 2020

Nearly one-third of world population living under some form of lockdown / Italy, Spain become hardest hit countries / WHO declares pandemic / Australia, Canada, China, EU, New Zealand, Russia, UK, US close borders / UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson contracts COVID, hospitalised for weeks / Nearly 40% of Chinese students enrolled in Australian higher ed shut out of country by travel restrictions / Many exchange programmes and industry events cancelled

SEAN LOCKE / STOCKSY, ANDREW “DONOVAN” VALDIVIA / UNSPLASH



April 2020

Over one-quarter of global deaths are in US / IMF warns that world is headed for economic crisis worse than 2008–09 financial crisis / Pandemic disrupting learning for 90% of students globally / 96% of destinations have travel restrictions

15 April
CASES / 1.9M
DEATHS / 123K

May 2020

Brazil, India, Russia, US account for two-thirds of cases / 60% of international students interested in enrolling in online learning while about 40% are more likely to defer start dates / UK says many ELT schools may close without more government support

31 May
CASES / 5.9M
DEATHS / 367K



31 July
CASES / 17.1M
DEATHS / 669K

June 2020

Cases in Latin America triple / New Zealand lifts lockdown, declares country COVID-free, keeps borders closed / US President Donald Trump suspends H1-B visas / Projected 2020 revenue shortfalls for Australian universities reach AUS\$5 billion / UK universities face shortfall of £463 million+ in 2020–21

4 June
CASES / 6.5M
DEATHS / 388K

31 August
CASES / 24.9M
DEATHS / 839K

July 2020

Third wave of COVID rises in parts of Asia / President Trump withdraws US from WHO / Scientists urge WHO to study evidence of airborne COVID spread / US requires international students to leave country if their programme moves online – later withdraws rule

August 2020

Another wave rises in Europe / WHO reports that global economy is losing over US\$375 billion per month due to pandemic / Russia approves “Sputnik V” vaccine / 90% of US universities plan hybrid instruction for Fall 2020

September 2020

India sees 90,000 new daily cases, second-highest after US / UK universities charter flights to bring international students back to campus / International flight arrivals down 65%

31 September
CASES / 32.7M
DEATHS / 991K





“COVID-19 is a practice test that exhibits our weaknesses; we must build resilience now for whatever comes tomorrow.”—*Volkan Bozkir, President of the UN’s General Assembly*



October 2020

WHO says Europe again COVID epicentre / President Trump contracts virus, enters intensive care / Canada opens borders to international students

27 October
CASES / 43.3M
DEATHS / 1.1M



November 2020

Pfizer and Moderna report vaccines over 90% effective / Joe Biden elected US president / International student interest in US rises / More students switching destinations for in-person learning / Few ELT providers expect much recovery before 2022

17 November
CASES: 53.7M
DEATHS / 1.3M

December 2020

Approval, distribution of vaccines begins / UK reports new, more transmissible variant / More variants emerge / 2020 is “worst on record in the history of tourism” (wto)

1 December
CASES / 61.8M
DEATHS / 1.4M



January 2021

French President Emmanuel Macron tests positive / Israel vaccinates over 20% of population / UK suspends in-person classes, locks down as cases rise

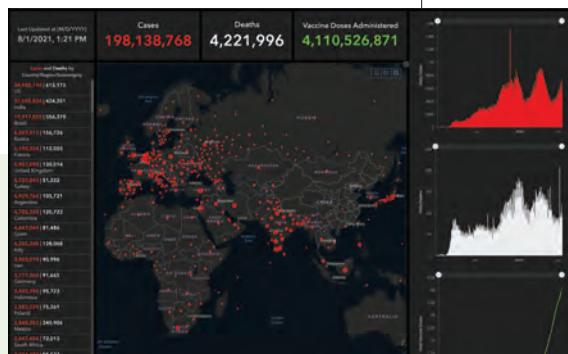
27 January
CASES / 98.2M
DEATHS / 2.1M

February 2021

WHO reports 6th consecutive week of declining global cases / UK cases fall nearly 80% after 6-week lockdown / Australia warns its borders may not totally reopen in 2021 / Canada toughens testing, quarantine requirements for international arrivals

23 February
CASES / 110.7M
DEATHS / 2.4M





March 2021

European Commission proposes Digital Green Certificate / US surpasses goal of 100 million vaccinations / Cases surge across the world

11 March
CASES / 116.7M
DEATHS / 2.5M

April 2021

Brazil's one-day death toll exceeds 4,000 / Students from China, Iran, Brazil, South Africa permitted to enter US / Survey confirms vaccination rollouts influencing student choice

18 April
CASES / 140.3M
DEATHS / 3M

May 2021

Highly contagious Delta variant spreads to 74+ countries / Australian border closures to extend into 2022 / Many EU countries announce selective border reopenings for summer / Agents report growing demand for study in US, Canada, UK

9 May
CASES / 157.3M
DEATHS / 3.2M

June 2021

WHO reports global cases, deaths declining / Over 2.3 billion vaccine doses have been administered worldwide / New Zealand signals that border closures will remain until 2022

29 June
CASES / 180M
DEATHS / 3.9M

July 2021

WHO reports global cases increasing, deaths also rising after 9 weeks of decline / Africa and Southeast Asia account for steepest increases in fatalities / Malta closes ELT schools amid COVID resurgence / UK ends legal COVID restrictions

11 July
CASES / 186M
DEATHS / 4M

As of mid-2021, vaccine rollouts have helped to beat COVID back in some regions. Infections and deaths are concentrated

in unvaccinated populations. New variants remain concerning. Some leading destinations continue to be closed. Vaccine passports offer hope for reinvigorating global mobility. There is unprecedented innovation in the edtech space. Student demand for study abroad remains strong. This historical moment is far from over.



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FACTS & FIGURES

Stats that provide fascinating insights into our industry right now



66%

Percentage of international students who engage with universities' social media channels before making an enquiry (Source: QS).

2 HOURS, 25 MINUTES

Average time global Internet users spend on social media daily (Source: Global WebIndex).

\$35

Amount of ROI generated by every \$1 spent on email marketing (Source: Campaign Monitor).

689 MILLION

Number of TikTok monthly users, putting the entertainment platform ahead of Snapchat, Pinterest, and Twitter (Source: Oberlo).

#1

TikTok is the app downloaded the most from Apple's App Store, ahead of YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat (Source: Oberlo).

5 OR FEWER

Number of hashtags recommended for Instagram posts – using more reduces engagement (Source: Oberlo).

80%

Percentage of video marketers who say that this channel has directly increased their sales (Source: Wyzowl).

39%

Percentage of agents who say their students switched to an alternative destination because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Source: ICEF Agent Voice survey).

49%

Percentage of agents who say offering more scholarships/financial incentives is the best way to boost recruitment in 2021 – ahead of rigorous COVID safety protocols (Source: ICEF Agent Voice survey).

47%

Percentage of students who became more interested in the UK when vaccination there rolled out faster than in most other destinations (Source: QS student survey).

MORE THAN HALF

Fifty-six percent of surveyed students in 21 countries said their mental health suffered as a result of COVID (Source: Chegg).

85

Number of top-ranked universities listed by QS as having changed tuition fees as a result of COVID, as of March 2021 (Source: QS).

30%

Percentage of international students who say they would switch destinations to study in person rather than online, even if it meant giving up a scholarship (Source: IDP Connect).

10×

The pandemic cost global tourism 10 times more in 2020 than the global recession of 2008–09, with roughly US\$1 billion lost in export revenues (Source: UN World Tourism Organization).

TOP 10

The 10 countries with the largest youth populations are all in Africa (Source: Visual Capitalist).

258%

Growth of China's African student population, 2011–17 (Source: Development Reimagined).

60%

More than 60% of the world's youth population lives in the Asia-Pacific region (Source: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).

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Creativity is for life, but it starts at school

A growing body of research demonstrates the key role that creativity plays in learning and development, and educators at all levels are increasingly aware of this. Encouraging creativity in children is strongly linked to important life skills, including communication, innovation, and adaptability.

A recent study from software giant Adobe found that 85% of college-educated professionals said that creative thinking is critical for problem solving, and 71% felt that creativity should be more emphasised in schools. Another recent analysis from LinkedIn found that creativity is the “soft skill” that employers prize most highly.

But what would it look like if we took that macro understanding of creativity down to the level of an individual school? It turns out it would look a lot like Shattuck-St. Mary's Forest City International School (SSM-FC) in Johor, Malaysia. This is a school where students are offered a wide variety of learning experiences – in science, the arts, outdoor exploration, and sports – and where learning happens both in the classroom and in the wider community.

Building on the tradition of one of the leading boarding schools in

the US, Shattuck-St. Mary's Forest City offers a top-tier, American-style education in a beautiful and safe setting in Johor. The school is home to students from 12 countries – from across Southeast Asia, China, Korea, Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada – and students have the opportunity to learn not only in English but also Bahasa Malay and Chinese. “Our teaching faculty brings a wealth of experience and expertise in the American curriculum,” says school head Dr Gregg Maloberti. “The majority of our international teachers are Americans. We also have teachers from ten other countries, including Canada, Ireland, the UK, France, and Malaysia. The experience and training our teachers bring to their craft create a truly international learning experience for our students.”

That holistic approach to education will see SSM-FC students outdoors in kayaking or sailing programmes one day, and then tackling an inter-disciplinary project about space travel the next (or even experimenting with electronic music in the school's recording studio).

That environment of inquiry and experimentation shines through in students' academic performance as well. Earlier this year, three SSM-FC

students claimed top prizes in the annual National History Day contest, leading an impressive field of 80 students drawn from some of Asia's top international schools. The theme for this year was “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding,” and SSM-FC students wowed the judges with winning entries that included a feature documentary on the Korean writing system, a special exhibit on how the printing press spurred the Reformation, and a web-based presentation on the Native American Navajo code talkers.

That impressive work reflects the academic standard of the school and it also shines a light on the rich and varied experience of SSM-FC students. Johor is set in a mangrove forest and Forest City is billed as Southeast Asia's first ecological city. “All the properties in Forest City are adorned with vertical greeneries, sky gardens, and rooftop gardens. They not only look beautiful, but also form a natural barrier against heat, naturally purify air, conserve rainwater, and reduce noise,” adds Dr Maloberti. “It feels like living in a tropical rain forest with greenery everywhere.”

Doesn't that sound like the kind of place that might inspire your creativity?



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RESTARTING MOBILITY

There is no sugar-coating it: the covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our industry in a way most of us could never have imagined. **No educator or agent has been untouched**, whether in their business or in their personal lives. But rather than succumb to the chaos, we have worked harder than ever before, adjusting operations and delivery models with lightning speed. **Educators and agents alike have put students first**, supporting their mental health and helping those who could not travel to stay on track with their plans to study abroad. The following **special feature package is intended to boost the tremendous efforts of all our friends and colleagues**. It centres first on how to create strong, effective educator-agent partnerships, then moves on to recruitment tips for the quickly changing Chinese market. The pandemic is not over, but it has shifted, not least because of powerful vaccines. With vaccinations and with their adventurous and determined spirit, **students will once again move across the world for education and experience**.





HAVE YOU CALLED YOUR **AGENT** TODAY?

Education agents are poised to play an even greater role in international student recruitment after the pandemic



WE HAVE been hearing it for months now: with all the uncertainty and disruption caused by the pandemic, frequent communication between institutional staff and education agents has never been more important.

“One of our biggest agent partners is a group based in Frankfurt, and we had more communication with them in the early months of the pandemic than we probably had in the entire year before that,” says Eddie West, assistant dean of international strategy and programmes at San Diego State University.

Silvia Diaz Queipo, of the Spanish agency Language Kingdom, echoed Mr West during an Edvisor webinar in early 2021: “We realised that [the pandemic] wasn’t going to last for just two months or three months, and we got closer to our main partners. We want our partners to survive and we want to survive as well. We need them and the schools need us.” Speaking on the same panel, Maura Leao, CEO of São Paulo-based Yázigí Travel and former president of the Brazilian Educational and Language Travel Association (BELTA), added, “The trust relationship has always been a very important part of our business ... but now more so than ever.”

As those comments suggest, it is fair to say the COVID-19 crisis has amplified essential elements of effective educator-agent relationships. Each partner can be a crucial source of information and market intelligence for the other, and each has a role to play in ensuring students are well served and supported.

RISING USE OF AGENTS

The use of agents has been rising among educators over the past decade, as institutions and schools have sought to:

- Diversify their foreign enrolments by opening new markets;
- Reach ambitious growth targets;
- Provide additional supports to students.

Agents are likely to play an even greater role after the pandemic, given educators’ need to rebuild international enrolments and because of the continuing limits on educator travel overseas. Students and educators alike will need more assistance than ever as they navigate evolving travel restrictions, public health conditions, testing services, and visa processing.

Already, students are relying on agents more because of the

DID YOU KNOW?

Of more than 80,000 prospective and current students who responded to the 2020 QS International Student Survey, **65%** said that they **found agents to be useful in helping them to study overseas**. Six in ten said that agents are **a trusted source of information on international study**.



pandemic. A November 2020 study from QS found that students are increasingly influenced by agents' recommendations and that educators who know how to integrate agents into their marketing plans stand to gain a competitive advantage. The QS survey data suggests that agents play a key role in helping to move students – who are still facing the uncertainties and challenges of the pandemic – towards enrolment. The survey report underscores that “up-to-date information about intake start dates, course offerings, fees, scholarships, or policy changes are critical to student decision-making, particularly in a year where there is so much movement and so many unknowns.”

HOW MANY REFERRALS?

Vincenzo Raimo is an adjunct professor at the Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology as well as an active researcher in the area of education agents. He describes the majority of agents as “professional organisations that work hard to advise students on their options and support them in the often-complicated process of applying to an overseas [institution or school] – including getting a visa and making travel, accommodation, and other arrangements.”

Mr Raimo describes a maturation in the agent sector over the past decade characterised by an expanding range of players, including large, venture-backed agent aggregators; prominent international agent networks; agents based in sending countries; and a growing number of agents based in leading study destinations as well.

It is always a challenge to pin down the exact proportion of agent referrals among the foreign student populations in major study destinations. But all indicators point to a growing number of students coming into schools and universities through agents.

For example, a February 2021 survey of US colleges by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC) found that nearly half (49%) of US colleges are currently partnered with education agents. Another 5% were actively exploring agent partnerships as a result of the pandemic. This is up from the 36% of US colleges who reported recruiting through agents in 2017–18.



Agents are likely to play **an even greater role after the pandemic**, given educators' need to rebuild international enrolments



DID YOU KNOW?

Institutional leaders in Australia, Canada, and the UK surveyed by IDP Connect last year indicated that **recruitment agents are now considered to be essential in achieving target volumes of enrolments** and in expanding geographic coverage.

In Canada, where international student numbers have roughly tripled in the past decade, nearly all higher education institutions as well as schools are engaged with agents. By some estimates, about half of all foreign students in the country are agent referred.

The use of agents is also widespread in Australia, where agents accounted for three out of four international enrolments (75%) in Australian schools, vocational institutes, English-language training centres (ELICOS), and universities in 2018.

The situation is similar in the United Kingdom, where nearly all higher education institutions and schools work with agents. It is estimated that 45–55% of foreign students have had the support of an agent in planning their studies.

WORKING WELL TOGETHER

Rising agency referrals have been accompanied by a growing body of research and best practice guides for working with agents, including those published by NACAC, AIRC, NAFSA, the British Council, and the International Education Association of Australia, to name just a few.

The recommendations within these guides are in keeping with findings in a research paper* published in December 2020 by several academics, including Eddie West and Vincenzo Raimo. The paper relies in part on a survey of international educators at universities in the US, UK, and Australia. It finds that success in agency relationships clearly requires active engagement on the part of institutions, especially in terms of oversight, training, support, responsive communications, and information sharing. The researchers found that institutions employing a more hands-off approach tend to see poor recruiting results and also lower levels of satisfaction with their agent relationships.

The researchers conclude that a one-size-fits-all approach is ill advised, and they recommend instead that institutions remain adaptable in their agent strategies to accommodate varying

*Iona Yuelu Huang, David Williamson, Gary Lynch-Wood, Vincenzo Raimo, Charlotte Rayner, Lindsay Addington, and Eddie West (2020), "Governance of agents in the recruitment of international students," *Studies in Higher Education*.



conditions in overseas markets, the competitive context, and the changing needs of students. The researchers also advise educators to carefully consider how many agents they can support, arguing that “working with an appropriate number of agents in a given market with active engagement leads to better results.”

The paper underlines the importance of accountability for both educators and agents. Transparency is key, especially on the part of institutions with respect to publicly disclosing agency relationships. “Greater transparency in HEI-agent relationships we believe, and would argue, is long overdue,” says Mr West. “All the more so given the information asymmetries and economic logic that can put students’ welfare at risk.”

Mr West notes,

“The [educator]-agent relationship is bilateral. In the past there has been lots and lots of attention paid to agent conduct, agent misconduct, agent training, agent misinformation, etc. By contrast, there has not been commensurate attention paid to [educators’] responsibilities and [educators’] obligations and how best to ensure that staff really understand the rules of the road and best practices for working with agents. We think that that balance needs to be better struck. The London Statement, for example, has a lot to say about what agents should or shouldn’t do, but very little to say about what educators should or should not do.”

The London Statement, as many readers will know, dates back to 2010 and was an early attempt to outline a broadly applicable code of ethics for international education agents. In the history of our industry, it was an important step in establishing standards of practice for international recruiters. But, as Mr West points out above, it rather overlooks the responsibilities of educators in supporting those good practices.

A MORE BALANCED FUTURE

It is possible that this balance will be reset. There is a recent effort in the UK, for example, to establish a new quality assurance

Researchers conclude that a **one-size-fits-all approach is ill advised**, and they recommend instead that institutions **remain adaptable** in their agent strategies



The National Code, Australia's standards framework for educators delivering overseas education, includes a section on working with agents.



The British Council offers guidance for agents representing UK institutions and schools.



framework for education agents. This follows similar frameworks enshrined in legislation in destinations such as Australia and New Zealand or otherwise reflected in industry protocols or statements, including the London Statement.

A recently released report from the British Universities' International Liaison Association (BUILA) and the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) calls for a new quality framework in the UK. This more contemporary initiative addresses British institutions as well as agents in its ambition to introduce "a single Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents [to] set expected standards for all education agents working with UK providers." The report states, "It is recommended that the new Code be developed through a co-design process with education agents, using the London Statement and British Council 'Good practice guide for education agents' as a base. To be effective, it will need to be widely adopted by UK providers."

BUILA and UKCISA advise,

"To maximise the integrity of the UK's education agent quality assurance framework, all providers should adopt good practice in appointing, training, supporting and managing education agents; ultimately, the contracting provider is responsible for their education agent's practice as it relates to their institution, and must provide the education agents with the tools to accurately represent them."

More broadly, there are a number of efforts in progress with respect to codifying or professionalising the role of agents in international education. These are variously concerned with expanding or improving agent training, establishing new models for agent certification, or, as in the BUILA-UKCISA example, enshrining new codes of practice. Taken together, these different initiatives are all leading to the same place: a more transparent and effective environment for educator-agent relations, and one where the responsibilities and priorities of all parties are clearly established and reflected.



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A Torrens University Success Coach meets with a new international student.

Building stronger career connections through work-integrated learning

Ask an international student why they chose to study abroad and they will almost certainly cite career goals as a top motivation. Many surveys underline the importance of this major factor; in fact, one study noted on page 78 found that 81% of students said that a desire for improved career opportunities was the main reason they went abroad to study.

Students and their families have placed a growing emphasis on career outcomes over the past several years, and the pandemic will only increase their focus on the return on investment associated with studying at a particular school and in a particular programme. As a result, educators around the world are investing more heavily in career services for international students and expanding placement services for practicums and post-study employment.

At Australia's Torrens University, targeted career outcomes for graduates are the nucleus around which programmes and services are designed and brought to life. This starts at the earliest stages of programme design, where courses are developed in collaboration with

industry. After that, career outcomes are reflected throughout the student journey; students are supported with mentoring services, practicum placements, and the opportunity to work on real-world problems and projects for clients in the field. All undergraduate programmes include work placements, and all post-graduate students are asked to incorporate into their studies a focus on a specific industry problem.

Torrens University calls this "work-integrated learning," an approach geared at preparing students for their careers long before their formal job search begins. "A lot of graduates struggle in their early career because they know the theory but they've never done the job," says Petra Eckerova, Torrens University's Director of International Recruitment. "For an international student, the biggest challenge is finding that first job after graduation. If they leave it until they graduate, it is extremely difficult. So putting it as part of the course – arranging introductions for students and giving them an opportunity to develop that real-world experience – is key."

Torrens University's Director of International Communications

& Agent Engagement, Hannah Payne, adds that students have personalised support throughout that process in the form of an assigned "Success Coach": a qualified industry professional who advises the student throughout their study journey and who helps them prepare to enter the workforce. This is one part of a support system within the university that helps the student to network in their chosen field and to participate in consulting clinics and real-world client projects. One high-profile example of this work is the landmark *Thin Ice VR*, a virtual reality experience that retraces the 1914 crossing of Antarctica by famed British polar explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. The university is a partner in the documentary, which was written and directed by James Calvert, a design lecturer at Torrens University. The production also opened up a number of opportunities for Torrens University students to work alongside industry professionals. "We're excited that Torrens University students can gain experience with a production of this scale and complexity, and learn about the innovative techniques being used," said Mr Calvert.





CHINA: THE OPPORTUNITY REMAINS

IT MAY BE MORE CHALLENGING
THAN IN THE PAST TO RECRUIT IN CHINA –
NEW STRATEGIES CAN HELP



We have all heard about the changing demographics, increased domestic higher education capacity, and political factors contributing to the slowing of Chinese outbound travel to Western destinations. Many institutions are also reporting recruitment challenges in the form of Chinese families' reluctance to send their children abroad in the pandemic. But as David Weeks, chief operating officer at Sunrise International Education (a company specialising in media, localisation, and programming for the Chinese market), said at the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC) annual conference late last year, China remains an "indispensable recruitment market."

This is partly because of its size and substantial population of affluent middle-class families, and also because, as Mr Weeks noted, "Chinese students still want to study abroad because of the many disadvantages of China's domestic university system."

A 2021 report from market research firm Bonard and Beijing Overseas-Study Service Association (BOSSA) concurs with Mr Weeks:

"A common question is, 'Has the current situation affected Chinese students' desire to study abroad and has the pandemic led to any shift in favoured destinations?' Our answer is [that] the desire for study abroad isn't going anywhere. As a matter of fact, it will stay on an upward slope."

The report cautions, however, that "the secondary education market, summer camps, and short-term programmes abroad are taking major hits." While the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) reports that the Chinese government is planning to "build 'a mechanism'" to dissuade Chinese children from going abroad for education, the fact remains that the

competition for school places in China is so fierce that demand for overseas study will remain, especially after pandemic-related travel restrictions ease. As the SCMP notes, "In major Chinese cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, fewer than 60% of junior high school students are admitted to a senior high school."

As for higher education, Mr Weeks told the AIRC audience that the following fundamentals ensure China remains fertile ground for recruiting:

- 130 cities have populations exceeding one million;
- The middle class is growing fast, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities;
- The secondary school system is massive, with more than half a million students in international K-12 schools;
- China's economy is rebounding this year from the pandemic-related contraction in 2020.

"No next China" to fall back on

In a June 2021 article in *Times Higher Education*, the British Council's Matt Durnin argues that for most institutions, the Chinese market remains essential despite the country's more challenging recruitment environment. Institutions can and should diversify for a number of reasons, but as Mr Durnin says, "There is no 'next China,'" in terms of the market fundamentals required for sheer outbound numbers. India might eventually prove as fruitful, but not until its development and economic growth improve substantially.

Mr Durnin acknowledges that recruiting in China may feel "sluggish" at the moment – but only in the short term: "Over the medium to longer term ... we are likely to return to the pre-pandemic trend line." His advice to institutions is to "make a clearer case for their return on investment, particularly in terms of employability. This will mean investment in career services and links to Chinese employers."





10 ideas for recruiting in China right now

2

Enlist the help of satisfied current students

Testimonials are powerful tools to break through to Chinese prospects considering an increasingly wide range of destinations and institutions. Locate students whose experience with your school has been positive even in the pandemic, and ask them to share their perspective with families in China. This could be crucial given the many Chinese parents who have indicated in global surveys that they are especially worried about their children's safety or the possibility of discrimination or racism in study abroad destinations. Current students can also play a role in your online webinars for Chinese prospects and their parents. Many parents won't be at all fluent in English, and your students can speak to them or can translate into Mandarin.



1

Nurture your network of schools, agents, and alumni in China

Tight pandemic border restrictions mean that travelling to China is virtually impossible at the moment. Increase communications, provide more resources, and if possible, offer more incentives. Sending alumni and/or in-country representatives to well-attended college fairs as representatives is a great idea, as peer-to-peer influence remains strong.



3

Adapt online content for China

At the AIRC annual conference last year, Sunrise's Gavin Newton Tanzer, a co-presenter with Mr Weeks, reported results from research that looked at 2,000 websites whose primary audience was Chinese consumers. Of those websites, "94% were blocked in China or had long time page load, virtually none had any content localisation for China whereas 89% were not optimised for search engines in China."

Consider this: Google commands just 2.3% of the Chinese search engine market. For your website to even be found in China means you have to invest in being discoverable on Baidu (over 75%

of the Chinese search engine market) and on Sogou (15% of the market but the leader in China's booming voice-activated search market). Educations.com advises, "Don't forget to search your own website and competitor's websites in ... Baidu, to ensure you are representing your university with trusted, high-ranking sites."

If you don't have a landing page specifically for Chinese prospects that is translated into Mandarin, it's more than time to create one. Ideally, work with a website localisation company with expertise in the Chinese market so that you can reflect cultural nuances and preferences and avoid translation mistakes.



4

Consider more targeted recruiting



Competition is especially fierce for Chinese enrolments in business administration and STEM programmes, but those aren't the only programmes for which there is demand. A survey by BOSSA, for example, found that there is now more interest in arts and design as well as in education than there was five years ago, and the Center for China and Globalization has also reported more demand for these programmes.



5

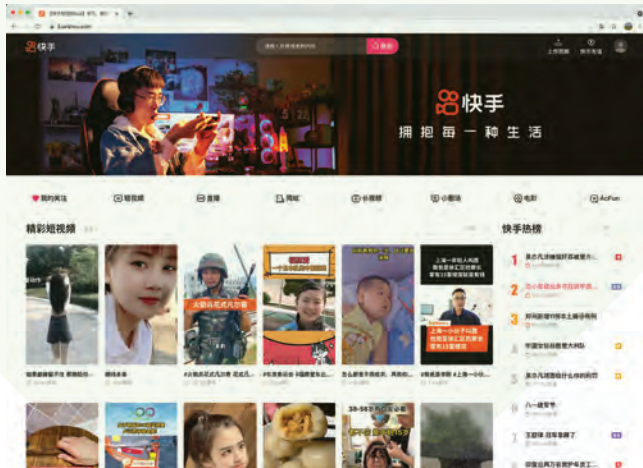
Align your career services with the job market in China

Many Chinese students studying abroad want to go home after graduating to find a job in their own economy – China’s Ministry of Education says that 80% of all Chinese graduates returned home after their studies abroad between 2016 and 2019. Work on establishing links with successful Chinese companies and ideally work with them to create practicum and internship opportunities for returning students. Once you do, make sure to broadcast these linkages far and wide: Chinese students and families are ever more interested in the ROI of a foreign degree.



6

Invest in video marketing



Video-only sites such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and Bilibili are huge right now.

7

Monitor your social media



You probably have a presence on social media sites such as WeChat and Weibo – but just being there isn’t enough. Monitoring the conversations and results on those channels should be a priority for your international marketing team. With all your digital marketing, ask agents for their feedback. They know better than anyone what their students are influenced by and what does and doesn’t work.



8

Consider smaller cities

Generally speaking, there is less competition in recruiting Chinese students in smaller cities with rising numbers of middle-class families (see graphic on page 51). McKinsey & Company has predicted that Tier 3 cities will host 31% of China's middle class in 2022, while Deloitte research concludes that lower-tier cities “represent significant opportunity for success thanks to their population size, increasing personal wealth, low levels of brand loyalty, and a healthy appetite for new products,” as well as increasing Internet penetration in Tier 3 and Tier 4 cities.



9

Investigate the entire customer journey

Carefully consider the perspective of Chinese families evaluating different foreign institutions. Many institutions think they are translating enough content into Mandarin to be effective – but they may not be. Global research consultancy CSA has found that global websites commonly localise only 5–15% of their content to “top-tier” languages such as Mandarin. The analysts say that this can lead to businesses losing up to 80% of their total addressable market at some point along the customer journey. Strikingly, nearly one-half (48%) of the more than 8,700 people they surveyed said they leave a website when they encounter a problem related to insufficiently localised content. The rest “look for support from the provider, a friend or colleague, or online search, social media, or video platform.” Thinking of the journey from enquiry to application to enrolment – and all the customer support needed at each stage of the journey – how much of your content is available in Mandarin for Chinese families?



10

Check your mobile performance

As Educations.com puts it, "In the Chinese market, your website performance on mobile will make-or-break your campaigns. Make sure to double-check your translated pages for mobile, and closely monitor your Google Analytics data on China by device for bounce-rate and conversion."

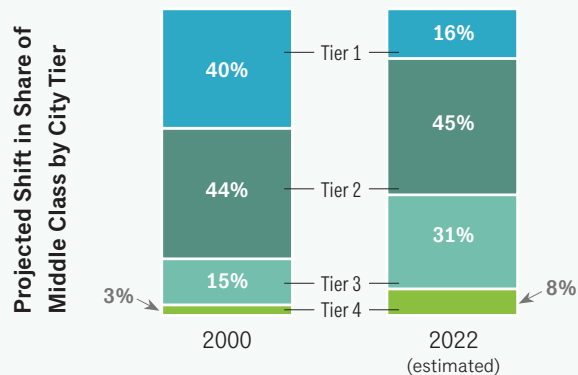
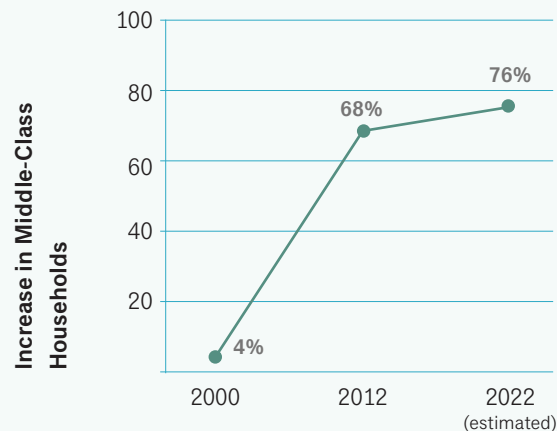


The bottom line

Recruiting successfully in China today requires more sophistication than in the past, because much of the opportunity lies in identifying new markets and student segments within the country. Many smaller cities hold promise and offer less competition than the major metropolises do. Students in these cities have unique circumstances, needs, challenges, and priorities – they should not be approached using one broad brush stroke. Identifying excellent agents and partner schools with a presence in target cities is essential for gaining the local understanding required to achieve good results.

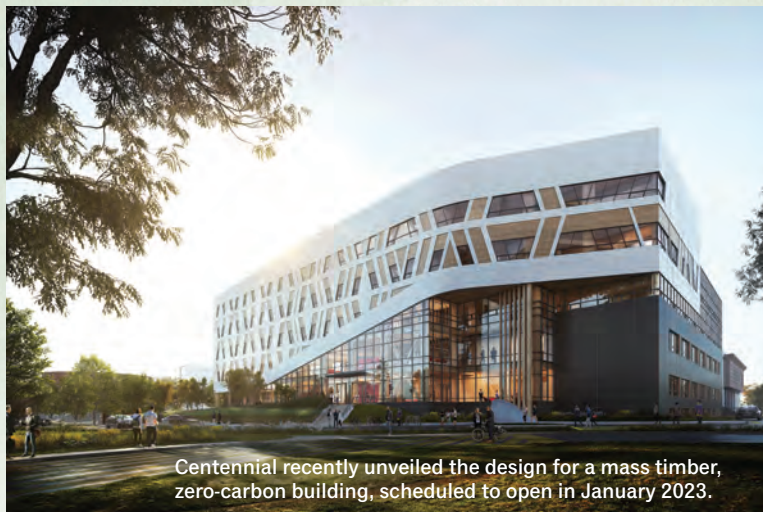
China's Growing and Mobile Urban Middle Class

McKinsey China shows the changing distribution of the middle class in China



Centennial College is Ontario's first college of applied arts and technology. Centennial offers experiential learning, flexible delivery options, and coveted co-op and internship placements

www.centennialcollege.ca



Centennial recently unveiled the design for a mass timber, zero-carbon building, scheduled to open in January 2023.

Getting ready for the new world of work

In the early stages of the pandemic in March 2020, and in the face of rising COVID-19 cases, the Canadian province of Ontario declared a state of emergency and began closing schools and institutions. It was a chaotic time as educators struggled to move programmes and services online. The staff and faculty at Toronto's Centennial College were similarly challenged, needing both to respond quickly to the urgent needs of the moment and to keep a focus on the future and the new world of work.

After an initial pivot to virtual learning in spring 2020, Centennial made a further investment in "anytime, anywhere" digital learning options and credentials. Committed to transformation, faculty, IT staff, and administrators worked alongside instructional design and educational technology specialists to adapt and extend the curriculum to ensure a great learning experience online. This process was aided by the fact that Centennial was already an established leader in virtual learning before COVID, with just over 94% of the college's online students reporting high levels of satisfaction with their virtual learning experience.

By fall 2020, 50 full-time online programmes were ready for flexible global delivery across time zones.

Centennial will return to in-person learning for the 2021–22 academic year, but it will do so alongside more than 200 programmes that are now offered through online, hybrid, or hyflex delivery. "Thanks to a dedicated and innovative team of faculty and staff, we have been able to adapt and offer the same robust, high-quality curricula that we deliver in the classrooms, ensuring that students, regardless of where they are studying around the globe, are still able to connect, collaborate, and pursue their academic and career goals," says Dr Craig Stephenson, Centennial's president. "This is an equally engaging and transformative learning experience that will prepare our students to play a vital role in the rejuvenation of our communities, nations, and the world as a whole."

That first wave of global online learning unfolded through 2020 with students from 121 countries studying in online or hybrid programmes at the college. Students learning remotely in online programmes have the flexibility to transfer to Canada, or to complete their industry-recognised programme entirely abroad. Either way, their programmes will emphasise hands-on, experiential learning. These students will be building skills for the post-COVID workplace.

Virginia Macchiavello, Centennial's associate vice president for international education, adds, "A moment of crisis, such as we've all experienced during the pandemic, is also a proving ground where we can help students gain the skills that employers are most looking for. For example, developing resilience and adaptability; becoming fluent in using high-tech technologies that are needed to learn and collaborate online; being able to respond to change in effective and innovative ways. What employer does not want someone with this skillset?"

That focus on the development of real-world skills is evident in some of the recent performance metrics for Ontario colleges. According to those indicators, Centennial is the top-ranked college in the Greater Toronto Area for student and graduate satisfaction. Further, employers rate Centennial graduates first among graduates of all Greater Toronto-area colleges.

Centennial also has one of the largest international programmes in Canada, and, in the year before COVID, it hosted nearly 14,000 international students from 126 countries. Its extensive network of global partnerships is underpinned by 11 offshore offices and a learning site in Suzhou, China (Suzhou Centennial College).

SIDEKICK



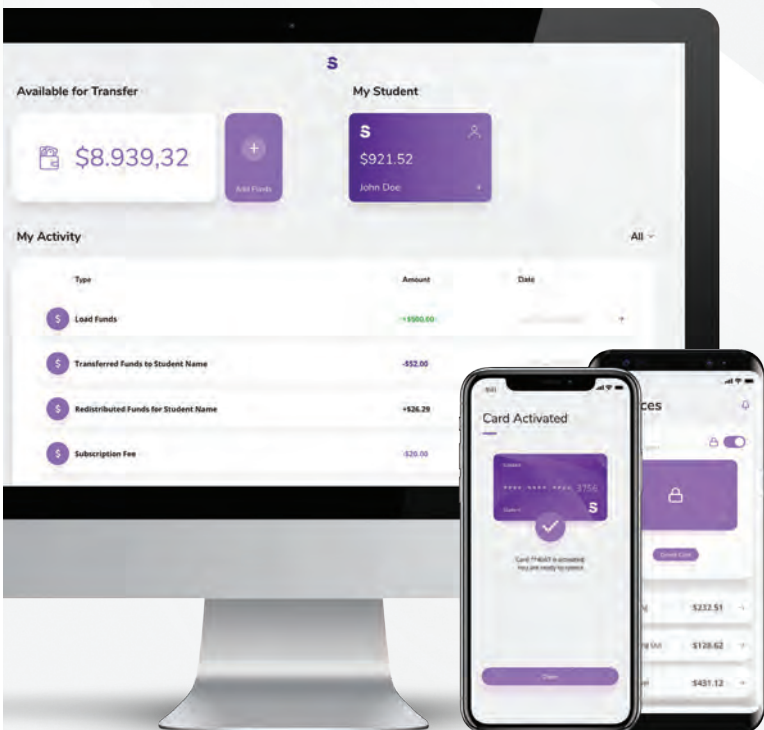
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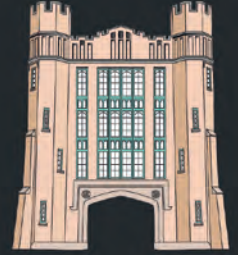


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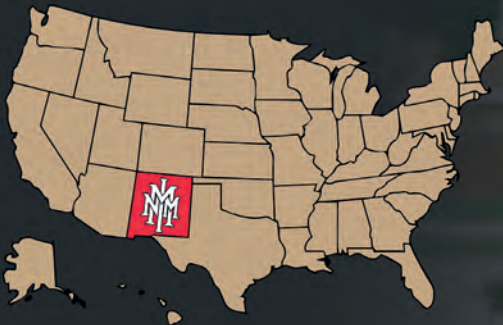


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TRENDS

Virtual internships, the future of industry events, and a new kind of financing for international students



AUSTIN DISTEL / UNSPLASH



GROWING INTEREST IN VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS

Students are warming to the opportunity of internships completed remotely



Not long ago, student demand for physical, in-person work placements located in-country or overseas far exceeded that for virtual internships undertaken remotely from home. But the pandemic has ushered in a surge of interest for remote and hybrid (i.e., a blend of in-person and remote) internships, in no small part because so much education and work has moved online.

Many employers are now (1) looking for evidence that a job candidate can be productive working remotely and (2) seeking convenient recruitment funnels. Students who excel in their virtual internships are just the sort of workers these employers are looking for.

It hasn't taken long for students to reconsider the value of internships in which at least some of their work experience happens remotely and through meetings with colleagues and employers on platforms including Skype, Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Zoom. A College Pulse survey conducted in spring 2021 of 1,500 college students



found that more students wanted a hybrid internship (42%) than wanted a completely in-person experience (38%). Only 20% wanted their internship to be fully remote.

DISTINCT BENEFITS

Part of the appeal of virtual internships for some students is affordability. By working from home, they can avoid the costs of international or domestic travel, transportation, and accommodation that are often significant in traditional internships.

Another huge advantage is that virtual internships aren't tied to a particular location or pool of employers. Because of this, a student studying environmental science in the UK, say, could participate in a virtual internship with a pioneering eco-efficiency start-up in Costa Rica.

Borderless virtual internships also offer a major benefit for students studying abroad who intend to return home after graduation. Chinese students are especially likely to return home (up to 80% do) and are naturally interested in linking their foreign degrees to job opportunities in preferred Chinese cities – it's key to a favourable return on investment. It's not difficult to imagine a Chinese prospect deciding to apply to a particular foreign university upon discovering that the university can connect them with an internship with a top company located in China.

Without doubt, virtual internships stand to strengthen an institution's attractiveness to another international student segment: those planning to study online with a foreign institution from their home country. Being able to offer these students access to a global network of employers and peers through virtual internships represents a compelling competitive advantage.

BEST IN CLASS

Some universities have moved quickly to develop well-designed virtual internships. Last fall, for example, Oberlin College, in Ohio, designed a remote micro-internship programme that incorporated soft-skills development and a career readiness component. Dana Hamdan, associate

DID YOU KNOW?



- ▶ A survey of 278 executives by McKinsey & Company last year found that on average, employers were **planning a 30% reduction in office space.**
- ▶ In an analysis of eight countries representing 62% of the world's GDP – China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Spain, the UK, and the US – McKinsey found that **“about 20 to 25% of [their] workforces could work from home between three and five days a week” with no loss of productivity.**

dean and executive director of Oberlin's Career Development Center, wrote about the college's Junior Practicum in an article for *Inside Higher Ed*:

“We wove into the programme a series of complex problems – like climate change, refugee protection, politics and the media, gentrification, and political polarisation – that we knew would resonate with students We folded in sessions to help students with resumés, grant writing, branding, negotiation and many other skills. We organised group workshops on topics such as navigating the workplace as a person of color, allyship, inclusion and more. And then we sent them off to remote micro-internships to practise what they had learned.”

THE ROLE OF CAREER SERVICES

Oberlin's Junior Practicum is indicative of an institution that is wisely investing in career services. Research shows that too few institutions prioritise this area. For example, a Strada Student Viewpoint survey fielded by College Pulse last September of 2,000 students found that only 35% said their college was “excellent or very good at connecting education to meaningful careers.” Crucially, of those who said they had received excellent support, 83% said their education “would be worth the cost,” while just 17% who said they had received poor support believed that their investment in college was worth it.

The long and short of it is that strong career



COMPONENTS OF A WELL-DESIGNED VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP

- ▶ A supportive faculty and/or industry mentor;
- ▶ Regular networking with other employees and interns;
- ▶ Clearly communicated deliverables, deadlines, and expectations;
- ▶ Interesting, meaningful work that delivers true value to students;
- ▶ A professional environment (e.g., student has to prepare and dress appropriately for virtual meetings);
- ▶ Opportunities for casual, fluid, online coffee breaks and hangouts with colleagues.

services can greatly influence student satisfaction, and satisfaction leads to the positive peer-to-peer word of mouth that is so important for recruitment results.

THIRD-PARTY OPTIONS

College and university staff have their hands full, to say the least, because of the pandemic. With

resources stretched, some universities are turning to third-party companies to provide their students with remote opportunities.

One such company is Virtual Internships, an online platform that provides students with international work experience programmes across 18 career fields. The start-up, whose co-founders are Daniel Nivern and Ed Holroyd Pearce, received US\$2.5 million in investor funding this summer and is quickly gaining traction. In 2019, the company arranged internships for 100 students. In 2020, the number was 1,700, and this year, 6,000 students are expected to secure placements through Virtual Internships. More than 4,000 host companies across 70 countries are on the platform, and more than 100 universities and educational institutions worldwide are clients.

The way the model works is that students can pay Virtual Internships for their experience or a school can pay for students to have a guaranteed internship with one of the companies on the platform as well as an optional academic credit. The Virtual Internships platform manages the applications, screening, approval, and acceptance process from end to end. Programme duration is 4, 8, or 12 weeks, and students work 20 to 30 hours a week.

Mr Nivern explains that the platform is made for the quickly changing needs of students and employers:

“Digitalisation has completely accelerated the way we work with people across the globe and internships should mirror this pattern. With a focus on accessibility, diversity and clear learning outcomes, we’ve redesigned the internship experience for a new, virtual and borderless world.”

Whether organised by educators themselves or by third-party platforms, international virtual internships are clearly becoming more valuable to students, educators, and employers alike.



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Navigating a more complex landscape for English proficiency testing

Student mobility slowed and then largely ground to a halt through the first half of 2020 as COVID-19 reached into every part of our lives, leaving admissions processes, along with the travel and study plans of many thousands of students, in disarray. In the midst of that confusion and delay, the normal cycles of admissions exams – including English proficiency testing – were upended as well. Test centres were forced to close, normal test schedules were suspended, and language training centres and testing providers alike pivoted to online delivery.

As a result, many universities and colleges had to become more flexible around English-language testing requirements. Some institutions adopted test-optional policies, or more flexible timelines for incoming students. Others began to accept a wider range of tests.

“Institutions were looking for additional options for testing,” says Nicola Johnson, global recognition manager for Cambridge Assessment English.

Many universities and colleges needed advice about English testing more than ever last year. Even

before the pandemic, the field of standardised tests had expanded in recent years to include new entrants and a wider field of online, even on-demand, options. Looking back, COVID has proven to be an accelerator for those underlying trends.

“Life used to be really simple,” adds Ms Johnson. “You could count the different English tests on one hand. But throughout COVID what we’ve seen is a proliferation of new tests on the market. They are not all apples-to-apples options, however. Some are on-demand. Some have live proctoring and some don’t. It is all much harder to understand and I think it must be quite overwhelming for university admissions departments.”

The disruption in normal English testing processes has also been challenging for students. Going abroad to study, and especially to study for an extended period in a degree programme, is an extremely important and complex decision. So too is the student’s choice of English test, especially to the extent that that choice can play a part in how the student’s visa and admissions applications are evaluated.

All this means that students will now need to evaluate their choice of tests carefully, and so too will admissions offices. And both will likely be weighing the reliability of more established tests against the prospects of greater flexibility or access for students. In general, Ms Johnson expects that we will see a return to more traditional testing cycles. “Owing to a combination of things – access to testing, economic factors, even the local school context of the candidates – many will still be more comfortable with traditional, in-person testing.”

That same emphasis on more established testing methods may also hold true for admissions offices. “In the past, higher education institutions wanted to keep things simple, and to keep a limited number of tests that they would accept,” she explains. “Going forward, they may want to accept a wider range of tests so that they don’t disadvantage themselves or students. But those tests have to be fit for purpose. We see ourselves as a trusted expert in the field,” says Ms Johnson. “We are part of a university ourselves.”



THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRY EVENTS

Going forward, will industry events be held online or in person? Chances are the answer is “both.”



Whether you are an educator, agent, service provider, or other stakeholder, working in international education means that you are likely to attend a number of industry events throughout the year. Student fairs, networking events, association meetings, and sprawling conferences such as NAFSA and EAIE mean that the average industry professional's calendar is built around a series of plane flights and hotel bookings in cities around the world.

We gather to meet colleagues, develop new partnerships, recruit students, and gain new insights and expertise. That's the way our industry has always been, and this is, after all, a relationship business. Personal connections among colleagues and friends animate our industry and have, for some time, underpinned a dramatic expansion in international student mobility.

Then came 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a rather abrupt transition to online everything ... including industry events and meetings. “Everyone learned how to meet online last year and a lot of people became very comfortable with it,” says



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ICEF CEO Markus Badde. “I don’t think we are going back from that. The future of events will be hybrid, with both in-person and online aspects. The big questions now are all around exactly what that is going to look like.”

Katerina Koderova, head of operations and delivery at QS, agrees. “There are benefits to virtual recruitment that won’t go away. This kind of remote engagement – whether through webinars, online events, and meetings – is going to stay.”

Part of the appeal is that virtual events allow recruiters to manage the top of the enrolment funnel more efficiently. As a related brief from QS explains,

“Prospective students can easily be channelled into receiving the information they need from the right staff person – and at a much faster pace than if they were seeking out information through various websites and forums. When a student is watching an on-demand video, using a chat box to ask questions, or live streaming an event that then triggers

them to learn more, they can quickly be directed to the relevant [institution or school] representatives.”

THE ADVANTAGE OF EFFICIENCY

There is an obvious challenge inherent in virtual events: educators have less opportunity to build more natural, intuitive, personal connections with students. But in some markets at least, the ability to more efficiently qualify and engage prospective students offsets that potential disadvantage for many institutions, schools, and agents.

Along with effective and responsive systems designed to connect at crucial touchpoints with prospects, the content on offer in the virtual booth is key. “Leading with strong content can make all the difference in making lasting impressions on students quickly,” adds QS. “Finding creative ways to attract students is vital, yet not as intuitive as it would be at a physical event ... Novelties such as free e-gift cards, virtual giveaways, or even a quiz that students can take on arrival can make institutions stand out.”

THE BIG PICTURE

Virtual events have a particular role to play in our current context, where there is still plenty of uncertainty around travel to and from countries that are still heavily affected by the covid pandemic or where significant travel restrictions still apply.

In February and March of 2021, the industry publication *EventMB* conducted a broad survey of event planners. Most expected to be able to return to live events between Q3 2021 and the first half of 2022. More than half (55%) said that “concern over the safety of attendees and stakeholders” was the biggest obstacle to resuming in-person events. A similar proportion noted as well that “a widely accessible covid-19 vaccine” would make them feel more confident in planning live events.

More than two-thirds of respondents (70%) said they expected to be running hybrid events going forward, and nearly all said that this will require planners to design separate, dedicated

We appear to be at the beginning of a new era of events and event planning in international education, one that will be marked by new levels of innovation



As virtual events have become more sophisticated, so too have the technologies that make them possible.

experiences for in-person and online audiences.

In a finding that will no doubt ring true for anyone who has either attended or organised an event over the past year, 4 in 10 said that “increased audience reach” would continue to be the biggest advantage of online events. On the flip side, more than half noted that the “inability to match live engagement” was their biggest frustration in online event planning.

BRINGING VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES TOGETHER

Speaking at a February 2021 event organised by event tech provider Swapcard, Jeff Youngs and Jennifer Beindorf, from GES Events, made the point that a hybrid event is experienced differently by people attending in person and by those joining remotely. As that hybrid meeting model evolves, its success will depend on bridging those two experiences – in effect, bringing the two audiences together for a shared attendee experience.

Mr Youngs and Ms Beindorf provided a number of ideas for connecting in-person and online attendees:

- Multiple camera feeds that show remote audiences different angles of the conference

floor or event space so they can better participate in conference sessions and networking at the live event;

- A physical “attendee wall” or display at the event venue with photos and bios of both in-person and remote attendees;
- Screens or monitors placed at key meeting points throughout the venue that allow in-person delegates to engage with those attending online;
- Shared experiences for both in-person and remote attendees, such as “behind the scenes” access to roundtable discussions with key speakers, organisers, sponsors, or VIPs.

INTO THE FUTURE

It is fair to say that most international educators still prefer to meet in person. But there are distinct advantages to incorporating a virtual element into events, especially in a global industry like ours where the ability to include a much larger audience from around the world is so important. We appear to be at the beginning of a new era of events and event planning in international education, one that will be marked by innovation and a much wider range of experience and participation than we have seen before.



INNOVATIVE LOANS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students with strong potential for post-graduate success can access loans that do not require a co-signer or collateral



For each international student whose family can afford to send them abroad, many other students face an uphill battle paying for studies at the school of their dreams. The events of the past couple of years have made the latter group even larger – which is unfortunate given the number of promising students within it.

A new kind of private lender is offering hope to some students by banking on their future successes rather than on their current fortunes. The early leaders in this new category are MPOWER Financing and Prodigy Finance, both backed by venture capital or investment bank financing.

Their model is to offer international student loans that do not require a co-signer or, even, collateral. Traditionally, co-signers and collateral are required as security in the event the international student is unable to pay back the loan.

NO CO-SIGNER, NO COLLATERAL

Traditional models of credit assessment rely on the borrower's credit rating or on the type of



security they can offer. But MPOWER Financing and Prodigy Finance evaluate applicants based on future creditworthiness. By limiting eligibility to certain destinations, institutions, and fields of study, the lenders can rely instead on proprietary algorithms that focus on factors such as graduation rates, post-study employment rates, and alumni earnings.

MPOWER Financing relies in part on the following eligibility criteria for loans of between US\$2,001 and US\$50,000:

- The student must be enrolled at one of 350+ specified institutions in Canada and the US;
- The student must be within two years of graduation – so financing is available for those in the last two years of an undergraduate or a graduate programme.

Prodigy Finance, meanwhile, provides financing for eligible graduate students admitted to more than 800 specified institutions around the world. In addition to attending an approved institution, applicants must have been admitted to graduate studies in one of the following fields: business, engineering, law, public policy, and health sciences.

The loans have higher interest rates than would typically be charged to domestic students via conventional student-lending channels, whether commercial banks or government-backed loan programmes. However, many students find the terms attractive, especially given their more limited eligibility for bank financing or ability to secure a conventional loan on the basis of a family home or other collateral.

On page 66, you'll see an illustration charting the terms and payment schedule for an MPOWER US\$10,000 loan repaid over a 10-year term after graduation, with some interest rate discounts in place.

GREATER ACCESS TO EDUCATION

There are indications that lenders such as MPOWER Financing and Prodigy Finance are promoting wider access to study abroad opportunities and contributing to a more diverse international student body. MPOWER, for example, emphasises its social impact. In a 2019 report, the company noted that 85% of its clients could

not have financed their degree programmes without their loans. Three in four students (76%) were from emerging economies, and 53% of clients came from families with annual incomes of less than US\$15,000.



AN UNDERSERVED MARKET

“The world is increasingly global and connected, yet the banking industry has not kept pace,” says Prodigy Finance founder and CEO Cameron Stevens. “Traditional lenders are bound by local legal constraints, local data, as well as local repayments and collections, which ties an applicant’s credit profile to their location. For example, if you’re born and live in the US, you will have greater choice and access to financial services and credit. However, if you’re born in Ghana and want to study abroad, you’re more likely to be unbanked. We’ve worked hard over the years to change this. Our global credit model has allowed us to help international students with limited or no funding options to gain access to life-changing opportunities.”

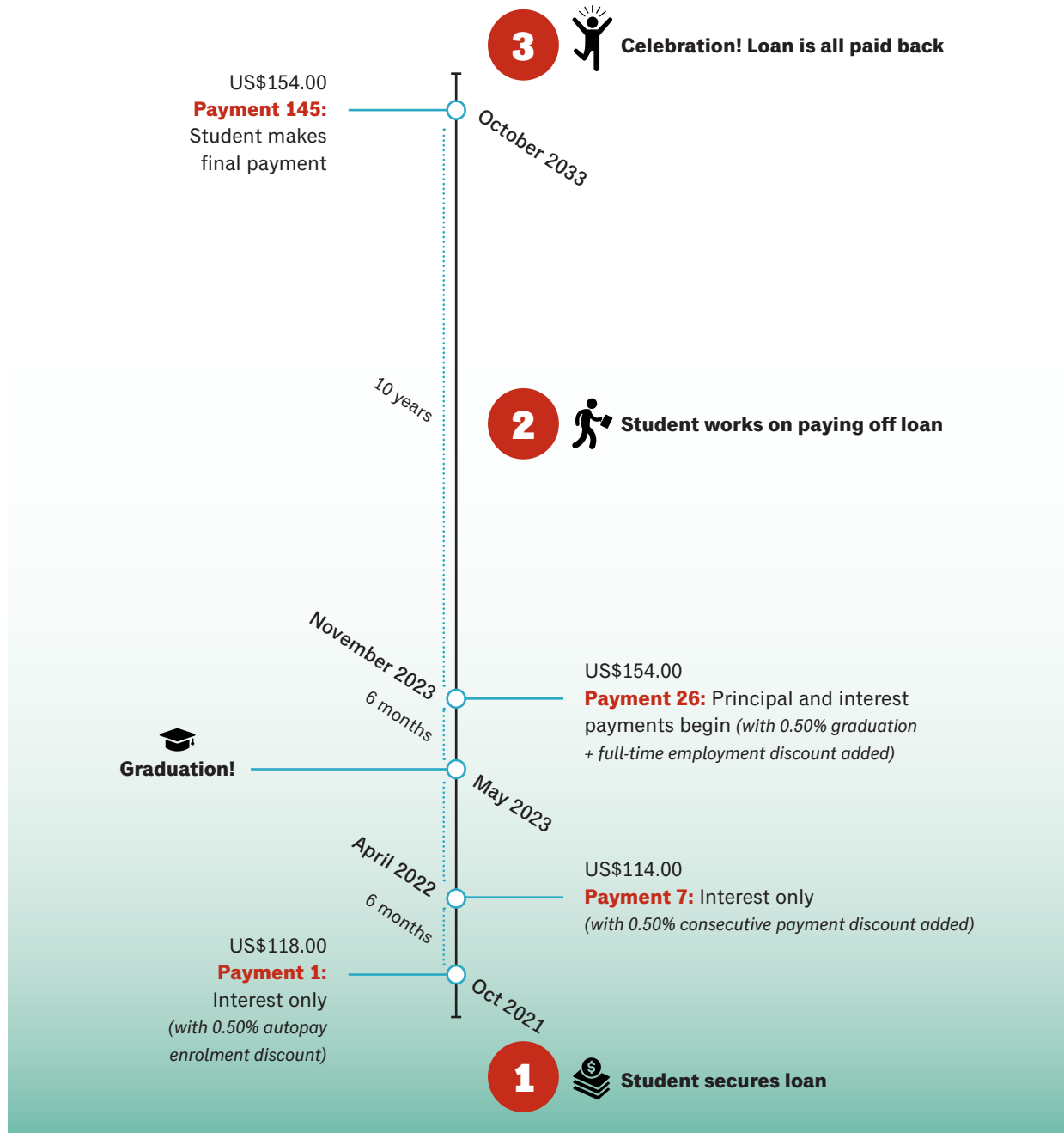


START TO FINISH: Paying back an MPOWER student loan

Loan amount: US\$10,000 / **Origination fee:** US\$500 / **Total loan amount:** US\$10,500

Interest rate: 13.99% (14.98% APR*) / **Total discounts:** 1.50% / **Interest rate after three discounts:** 12.49% (13.63% APR)

Programme start date: September 2021 / **Programme end date:** May 2023



* Annual percentage rate
Illustration adapted from MPOWER



THE LARGER CONTEXT

The new lenders' model is also relevant to educators who are now facing more challenges in attracting international students. As prominent international industry analyst Rahul Choudaha has written, "Many universities, especially in high-income countries, are at risk of pricing themselves out of reach to a large segment of international students." He notes,

"We are heading toward a future scenario where global learning experiences will be out of the reach of many aspiring international students. This is a wake-up call to action for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and leaders to focus on finding solutions to this affordability crisis, which

threatens the future of international student mobility."

Going forward, scholarship support or other financial aid will be an increasingly important factor in study abroad decisions for many students in emerging markets, and those students will be strongly attracted to more affordable destinations and institutions.

Private lenders such as MPOWER Financing and Prodigy Finance represent a compelling option for students facing affordability barriers. By banking on the promise of international students' earning power as opposed to their current financial realities, the companies also remind us of the potential of international students to transform economies and societies.



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ACADEMICS

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Graduation Rate

✓
4,000+
International Students

✓
550+
Active Agents Globally

OUR PROGRAMS

50+ PROGRAM OPTIONS

- ✓ Business and Finance
- ✓ Trade Skills
- ✓ Information Technology
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- ✓ Advanced Academic Language Programs

Programs are offered in **English or French.**





OUTREACH

Impress students with virtual reality and website infographics



PHOTO BY JOSHUA SONG / UNSPLASH



OPPORTUNITY ALERT: More affordable virtual reality

Offering international student prospects a virtual reality (VR) experience once seemed out of reach for most schools and universities. Not anymore.

Thanks to new, lower-priced VR devices, the tantalising idea of offering prospective students a headset with which to enter a 3D world linked to your institution has entered the realm of the possible. Students can interact with situations, people, and settings in computer-generated environments that promote your destination, campus, and programmes.

The Oculus Quest 2 (US\$299), for example, has been purchased by millions of people around the world. Buying Quest 2 devices and placing them in the hands of top education agents, or feeder schools in target markets, is a super idea. Doing so paves the way for engaging multiple students and families, and it positions your institution as innovative and cutting-edge in target markets.

Even more affordable options are available, such as Google Cardboard sets (under US\$50). Students pop their phones into these headsets to “visit new places, play immersive games, fly through space, and more,” says Google.



What can VR do that a traditional virtual campus tour can't?

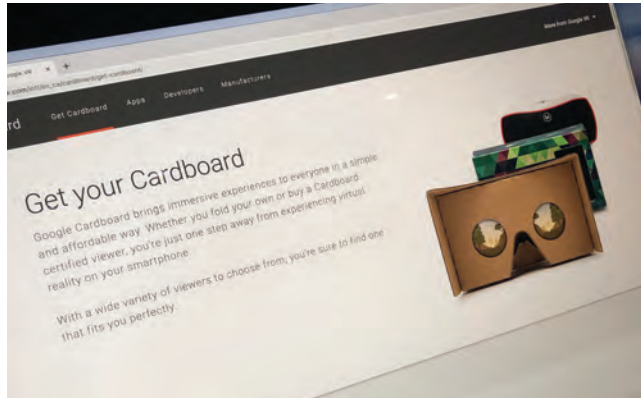
Virtual reality headsets such as the Quest 2 allow students to enter into spaces and participate – not just watch – aided by accompanying hand-held devices that allow participants to use their hands and arms to perform actions.

In a traditional virtual tour, students might “visit” a famous restaurant in a destination city. But with a Quest 2 or equivalent device, they can walk into the restaurant, select from the menu, interact with the server, and then settle in at a table alongside students from other nations. VR allows them to truly have a complete experience.

Google Cardboard offers a highly immersive viewing experience, but unlike the Quest 2, it does not offer participants choice or interaction within the experience because it does not come with handheld devices. If affordability is an issue, however, Google Cardboard is a great option to allow prospects to sample your institution through VR.



At right: Google Cardboard's website shows price points and versions and even a DIY option. Below: Quest 2 comes with two handheld controllers for an even more immersive experience.



What kinds of experiences are schools and universities offering through VR?

Students can use VR to participate in:

- Labs and field environments (for STEM students);
- Internship positions in which they have to make real-time choices;
- Medical procedures, as if they were right beside a surgeon;
- Clinics, where they can assess injuries and suggest treatments (for physiotherapy students);
- Art classes;
- School graduation ceremonies;
- Tours of different residence halls and dining areas;
- Walks down famous streets in university towns.



CASE STUDY / VR in action

In New Zealand, the Go with Tourism Education Programme has created a 10-minute 360-degree virtual reality experience to convince high-school students that a career in tourism and hospitality is a compelling choice. The fun simulation is strategically grounded in concrete business objectives.

THE EXPERIENCE

Headset-wearing students see opportunities for jobs in the industry through the eyes of an undercover agent tasked with preventing a catastrophic event. They are jettisoned from planes and bridges, thrown into a bustling commercial kitchen, immersed in a haka performance, and more.

THE BUSINESS RATIONALE

New Zealand's tourism and hospitality sector has taken a beating because of the pandemic; influencers, including teachers, have been telling students that the sector has been devastated by borders being closed for so long. But the pandemic will end, borders will open, and there will be skills gaps in the once-thriving industry.

Go with Tourism programme director Matt Stenton says, "We are at risk of not having enough talent for our industry when we recover. If we don't feed the funnel at the secondary school level, we may find ourselves in a worse position than prior to COVID-19."

Through the VR initiative, he says, "We bust myths, introduce students to a hugely diverse workforce, and are now entertaining them through this amazing new technology, which has already received an overwhelmingly positive response from the schools we're in contact with."

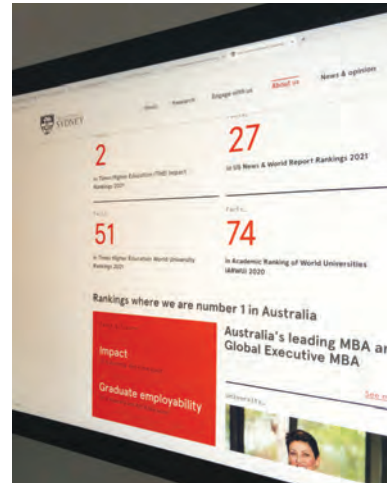
THE TAKEAWAY

New Zealand's Go with Tourism example is especially relevant as educators everywhere are increasingly trying to recruit international students to a more diverse set of programmes than in the past (e.g., outside of popular fields like business administration) – especially fields linked to local labour market skills gaps.

A mobile-friendly version of the 360-degree virtual reality experience is available on YouTube.



MAKE IT POP: Highlight data on your website



Students and agents have faced unprecedented uncertainty and confusion this year, and more than ever, they want answers and guarantees of the ROI of a programme or institution. Website infographics and succinct copy are powerful cues for confidence and credibility. Check out these screenshots from institutional websites to see how the universities are summarising their strengths.

Graduate outcomes

2020 Full-Time MBA Graduate Statistics

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50%

Accepted job offer by graduation

68.4%

Accepted job offer by three months after graduation

\$100k+

Median starting salary for graduates

Job Acceptance		Starting Salary	
Total graduates seeking employment	62%	Mean	\$96K
Accepted job offer by graduation	50%	Median	\$100K
Offer accepted by third month post-graduation	68.4%	High	\$190K
School-facilitated job acceptances	46%	Reported Median signing bonus	\$11K

Pepperdine University's Graziadio Business School (California, US) gets an "A" for concise presentation!



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UCW is the third university in Canada, and the first in British Columbia, to receive a 5 Star rating from QS Stars. There are only a total of seven institutions in the United States and Canada to receive a 5 Star rating.

EXCELLENT





Proof of excellence


What We Achieve

If there's a key to Kenyon, it's this: you thrive because your professors know and care about you — as a student, as a person.


- 130** students have been named Fulbright Fellows in the last 15 years, making Kenyon a top producer of these international scholars and teachers.
- 86** students have been named NCAA Postgraduate Scholars, ranking Kenyon second among Division III institutions.
- 35** students have won Goldwater Scholarships, the most competitive undergraduate award in the sciences, since 2000.
- 8th** is where Kenyon ranks in the country (ahead of every Ivy) for the proportion of STEM grads to earn a doctorate in a STEM field.
- 98%** of students applying to graduate school are accepted into one of their top three choices.
- 100%** of young alumni sur...
- 200** industries are repres... mentors, who will co... interviews.
- 1/4** of Kenyon alumni w... Chicago and Los Ang...

Kenyon University (Ohio, US) presents impressive stats on its website. This is just one of the “By the numbers” lists students can check out.


Explore Kenyon in brief




IN BRIEF




IN PICTURES




IN NUMBERS



IN OUR OWN WORDS



IN THE WORLD



ON A TOUR

Here are three things to know about Kenyon.

1) We come to Gambier, Ohio, from every region of the country and corner of the globe to focus on very big things in a small, wide-open space. 2) We invented the model of professors serving as academic advisors, because when teaching and mentoring go hand-in-hand, Kenyon students come out on top. 3) We believe that good writing is good thinking, and that the ability to put words to ideas moves us closer to a shared understanding.

“The kind of place that can feel like the heart of the universe ... when you picture a college, you see a place like Kenyon.”

P.F. Kluge '64
Journalist, author and Kenyon's writer-in-residence



Dialled in to what students want



La Trobe University (Australia) gets its world-leading ranking, industry connections, programme excellence, and graduate outcomes into one clear infographic.



What data should institutions display?

- Rankings, if available
- Average amount of time for graduates to accept job offers
- Average starting salary for graduates
- Prominent employers of graduates
- Connections (e.g., internships) with prominent employers
- Rates of participation in internships
- Student-to-teacher ratios
- Student satisfaction stats
- Diversity of international student population



What if we don't have enough data?

There is always a way to generate data! Remember, it doesn't have to be numbers. It can be quick infobites that present your institution in a compelling light.

One way of getting data is to send students and alumni (or employers of graduates) a short survey with a few questions about their experience at your school (or hiring grads). These people are as busy as the rest of us, so don't ask too many questions or they might not participate.

A post-graduation survey is another great idea, and one that your career services department can initiate. You can discover whether graduates ended up in fields related to their programmes, what their starting salaries were, how long it took them to pay down loans, and how long it took to find desirable jobs.

Another option is to access Bureau of Labour data for your city/region/country and cherry-pick facts to show that employers want grads from your programmes.

Attractive data showing how amazing your destination is (e.g., inclusion in rankings such as "most liveable cities," "most student-friendly cities," or "most competitive economies") are perfect for infographics.



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Rankings where we are number 1 in Australia

Facts & figures

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University



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Our Master of Business Administration and Global Executive MBA have been ranked number one in Australia in AFR BOSS Magazine's 2019 MBA Rankings.

We are also ranked first in Australia for the Master of Management in the QS World University Rankings (2020), The Economist (2017 and 2019) and the Financial Times.

The Financial Times has ranked the University of Sydney number 1 in Australia for the last eight

The University of Sydney (Australia) pulls together all its best rankings in a tight, easy-to-read presentation.



10 things students should be able to find in 10 seconds

1. What to expect from the study experience
2. Careers a programme might lead to
3. Number of dedicated career counsellors
4. Scholarships and financial aid information
5. covid-19 protocols in plain language
6. Average visa processing times
7. Average admissions processing times
8. Opportunities to work while studying and after graduation
9. Ability to bring dependents
10. Language test requirements

DID YOU KNOW?

Research by the Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab found that **46% of website users say a site's design** (e.g., font, colours, layout, and navigation) **is the #1 factor influencing their opinion of the brand's credibility.**



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Sault College hopes you and your families, colleagues and clients continue to be healthy and safe during the global pandemic.

We appreciate your hard work and extra effort on our behalf through these extremely difficult times.



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Latin America



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Regional Director
Latin America



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SPOTLIGHT

Career services are becoming a crucial advantage for educators looking to build enrolments

The most effective career services are more than counselling centres. They serve students by integrating crucial data (e.g., job opportunities for graduates according to industry, location, salary, and more), arranging internship placements, and managing alumni outreach and connections. They can also play a central role in collecting and presenting post-graduation data that are influential to international prospects researching where to study abroad.

81%

Percentage of international students who invested in education abroad specifically to “improve career opportunities” (International Student Employment Outcomes and Satisfaction (ISEOS) data from Cturtle and UniAdvisor).

5x

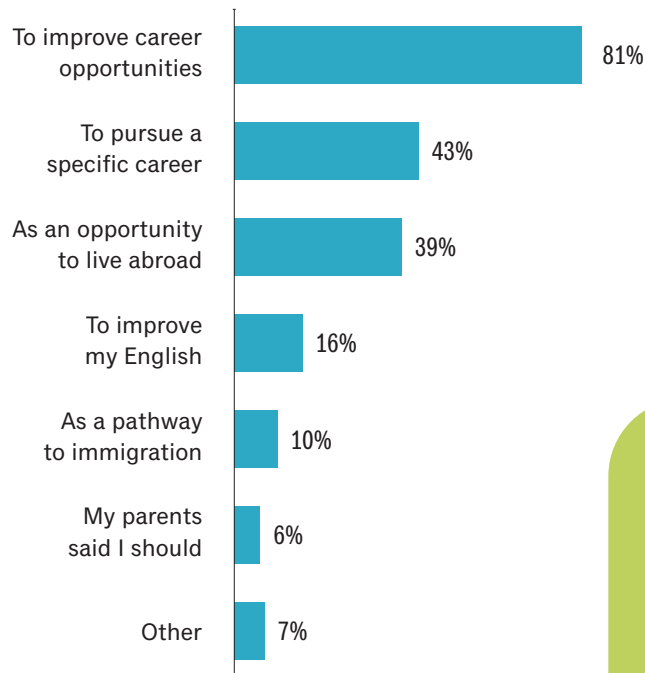
US graduates who strongly agreed that their college courses were relevant to their jobs were 5x more likely than less satisfied students to say that their education was worth the cost (Gallup, 2018).

AND....

Students who spoke “often or very often” with faculty or staff about their future careers were nearly twice as likely as students who reported “rarely or never” speaking with faculty or staff to say they were confident about having “the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the job market” (Gallup, 2018).



What were your main reasons you chose to study as an international student?



Source: Cturtle and UniAdvisor's International Student Employment Outcomes and Satisfaction (ISEOS) research.



Career services may be the most important yet underappreciated function in higher education For colleges and universities that put career services at the top of their strategic plans, it will become **one of the most important drivers of enrolment growth** as students and parents seek career outcomes as their top reason for attending.

Brian Busteed, writing in Forbes magazine



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AGENT VOICE

Education agents share their perspectives on recruiting in this challenging time

“What study challenges are your students currently experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?”

Throughout the pandemic, ICEF has been regularly surveying our global agent network. Agents’ responses underline that government policies – and processes – have never had more impact on where international students choose to study. In the first half of 2021, agents reported that closed borders (77%) as well as delays in visa processing (69%) posed the greatest challenges for students, ahead of financial concerns (47%) and qualms about programmes transitioning online (42%).

RECOVERY: NOT IF BUT WHEN

Roughly a quarter (24%) of agents are optimistic about their business recovering in late 2021, while 53% believe the rebound will happen in early 2022 – a reflection of the demand agents are seeing from students for study abroad in the near future.

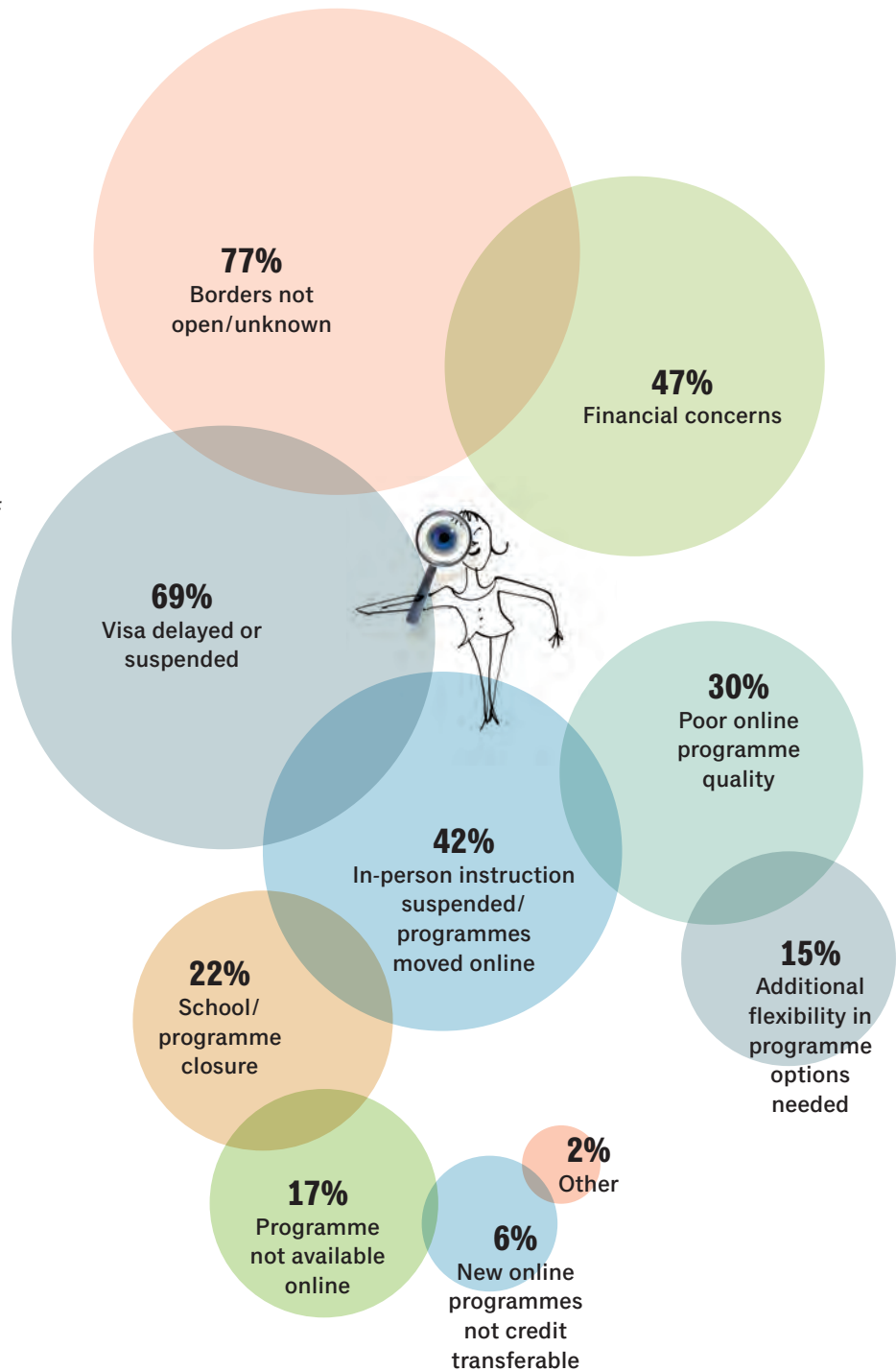


ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH; SURVEY SOURCE: ICEF AGENT VOICE SURVEY 2021.

APPLY NOW

IS NOW

Malcolm Mokwe, Graduate Business,
International Student (Nigeria)



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