

STUDY IN *Nova Scotia*

2019 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT BAROMETER
ATLANTIC CANADA

INTRO

AS NOVA SCOTIA'S
SECOND-LARGEST EXPORT,
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IS
VITAL FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY
& GROWTH OF OUR PROVINCE

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
BAROMETER (ISB) SURVEY
EXAMINED THE LEVEL OF
SATISFACTION AMONGST
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
STUDYING IN ATLANTIC CANADA

The number of international students enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide has **skyrocketed** in the past two decades. In Nova Scotia, international student enrollment rose by over 50% between 2010 and 2015. As Nova Scotia's second-largest export, international education is vital for the sustainability and growth of our province. Therefore, it is key that we understand the issues that impact international students' experiences on campus. Understanding and focusing on addressing these issues is key to attracting and retaining the 'right' international students to Atlantic Canadian institutions.

In fall 2019, 10 Atlantic Canadian higher education institutions participated in a co-op funded project run by Edunova. The International Student Barometer (ISB) survey examined the level of satisfaction amongst international students studying in Atlantic Canada. The ISB benchmarking survey provides higher education institutions, regions and countries with information concerning their international students compared to both national and international benchmarks.

The 2019 ISB surveyed a total of 179,950 international students, of which 4,606 were from Atlantic Canada, leading to a response rate of 27% as a regional average for Atlantic Canada. The ISB asked students what aspects of the learning and living experience matter most and what brought them to choose Atlantic Canada as an international study destination in the first place.

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Intro

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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The International
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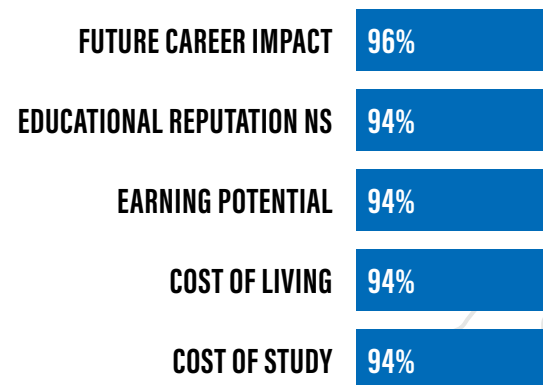
LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

amongst international students
studying in Atlantic Canada

DECISION MAKING

TOP 5 FACTORS

in study decision



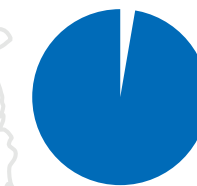
The key factor for international students who choose to study in Atlantic Canada is **Future Career Impact** (96%), followed by the **Education Reputation of Atlantic Canada** and **Earning Potential** post-graduation both scoring (94%). Throughout the survey, the importance of employability stands out. The research pointed out that employability significantly affects the recommendation of the study experience. It serves as a decision-making factor in selecting Atlantic Canada for study, and contributes to students' happiness whilst studying in the Atlantic Provinces. It is also an area where, particularly in international comparison, the higher education institutions that took part in this Atlantic Canada ISB did, on average, better than the global benchmark.

Both in the learning and support areas, a focus on helping students make the transition from student to professional was identified as a key recruitment differentiator for the region. The current generation of students makes study decisions with the world of work in mind—therefore any institution or region that is able to support this crucial step will benefit in relation to its future student recruitment efforts.

THE CURRENT GENERATION OF STUDENTS MAKES STUDY DECISIONS WITH THE WORLD OF WORK IN MIND

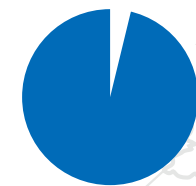
A FOCUS ON HELPING STUDENTS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM STUDENT TO PROFESSIONAL WAS IDENTIFIED AS A KEY RECRUITMENT DIFFERENTIATOR FOR THE REGION

KEY FACTORS WHY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CHOOSE TO STUDY IN ATLANTIC CANADA



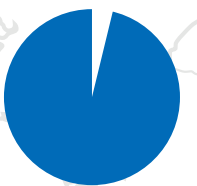
96%

Future Career Impact



94%

Education Reputation of Atlantic Canada



94%

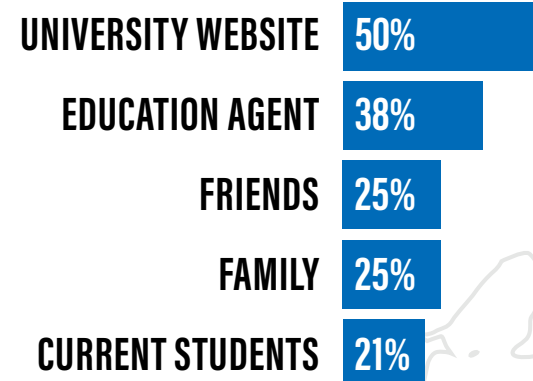
Earning Potential

Decision Making

BRAND STRENGTH

TOP 5 INFLUENCERS

choice of institution



Atlantic Canadian institutions should prioritize creating accessible and intuitive websites with information and resources to support current and prospective international students.



54%

of students said that the Atlantic Canada region was most important in their decision of where to study



42%

of students claimed the university was the most important in their decision making

85%

of students said that Atlantic Canada was their first region/country of choice for international education

Brand Strength

LEARNING

THE TOP THREE FACTORS

for recommending the study abroad experience to prospective students

EMPLOYABILITY - 81%

WORK EXPERIENCE - 73%

CAREER ADVICE - 74%

The overall satisfaction with the learning experience is high, according to international students attending higher education institutions in Atlantic Canada. International students indicate they are pleased with the **Performance Feedback** and the explanation of **Grading Criteria** provided, scoring respectively 5.1% and 4.6% higher satisfaction than the global average. Also, the **Virtual Learning Environment** and the **Online Library** facilities score better than the global benchmark (2.9% & 1.2% respectively). Importantly, Atlantic Canada scores above average on **Employability** (i.e. learning that will help me get a good job, at 81.2%), **Work Experience** (i.e. work placements as a part of my studies at 73.1%), and **Career Advice** (i.e. advice and guidance on long-term job opportunities and careers from academic staff at 74.3%), are the top three factors for recommending the study abroad experience to prospective students.

Attracting and retaining international talent is important, not just for the higher education institutions, but also for the Atlantic Canadian region. The three elements with the biggest impact on recommendations have all improved over time since the first EduNova ISB in 2015. This is particularly important to note as **Future Career Impact** is the key factor when deciding to study in Atlantic Canada.

LEARNING MATRIX STUDIES

Atlantic Canada Institutions rank high in employability compared to the global benchmark (1.2%) higher than global benchmark

THE THREE ELEMENTS WITH THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE ALL IMPROVED OVER TIME SINCE THE FIRST EDUNOVA ISB IN 2015

96%

of students feel engaged with their studies

DERIVED IMPORTANCE - LEARNING - TOP 3



43%

Employability
(satisfaction is at 81%)



40%

Work Experience
(satisfaction is at 73%)



39%

Career Advice
by faculty members
(satisfaction is at 74%)

Learning

LIVING

THE MOST IMPACT

on recommending the international study experience comes from:

GOOD CONTACTS FOR THE FUTURE

SOCIAL FACILITIES

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

DAILY LIFE

derived importance of day to day activities:



The importance of the living experience should not be underestimated, as it may be a cause of joy or anxiety that colours how international students feel about having studied abroad. The ISB 2019 data shows a lower overall satisfaction with living in Atlantic Canada than in the Global ISB. Contributing factors may be dissatisfaction with the financial aspects of sustaining oneself as an international student in Atlantic Canada, where the cost of living may be considerably higher than students anticipated upfront. (e.g. **Living Costs** scores -7.1% below the global benchmark, with **Housing Quality** and **Financial Support** both being -6.4% below the global ISB). Another area that would benefit from managing expectations upfront would be the public transport situation in the Atlantic provinces. Nonetheless, the most impact on recommending the international study experience comes from **Good Contacts for the Future, Social Facilities, Social Activities**, again the connection to the future world of work seems of importance for the international students that opt to study in Atlantic Canada.

95%

of students said they feel welcome in their experiences as an international student studying in Atlantic Canada

Living

WHAT MAKES STUDENTS HAPPY:

EMPLOYABILITY

GOOD CONTACTS (FOR THE FUTURE)

SOCIAL FACILITIES

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

FORMAL WELCOME

LIVING SATISFACTION

In 2019, Atlantic Canada did not improve in the area of "Making friends from Canada" remaining consistent with the data from 2015 at 74%.

(to be specific: 74% in 2015, 75% in 2017, 74% in 2019)

ARRIVAL & SUPPORT

ATLANTIC CANADA
OUTPERFORMS THE
GLOBAL BENCHMARK WITH
AN EXCELLENT ARRIVAL
EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS

ONLY
29%

of international
students indicate
they make use of
the career service

It is essential to consider the entire student journey, from arrival to integration and career prospects—ensuring international students recommend their experience to other prospective students considering studying at an Atlantic Canadian institution. The arrival process is the start of the student journey, and Atlantic Canada outperforms the global benchmark with an excellent arrival experience for students. Student well-being is slightly lower in Atlantic Canada than in the Global ISB (89% vs 91%), with some room for improvement for making friends with other international students. In the **support** area, most services score high satisfaction rates.

The **Career Service** is of imminent importance for the recommendation of the international study experience, and the satisfaction is very high at 90.3%. However, more use of the career service would be beneficial as currently, only 29% of international students indicate they make use of the career service.

88%

of students reported that
they were satisfied (61%)
or very satisfied (27%) with
their arrival experience

Arrival & Support

89%

of students reported
they were either
satisfied (72%) or
very satisfied with
the support services
(17%) at this stage in
the year

87%

of students reported that
they were satisfied (62%) or
very satisfied (25%) with all
aspects of their experience at
university so far

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The longitudinal data shows

STRONG IMPROVEMENTS

from 2015 and 2017 to the current dataset in 2019

FUTURE CAREER IMPACT IS THE CRUCIAL FACTOR FOR DECIDING TO STUDY IN ATLANTIC CANADA AND #1 FOR STUDENTS' HAPPINESS

The ISB has supported higher education institutions within Atlantic Canada to better tailor their international study offers to meet evolving international student demands. The longitudinal data shows strong improvements from 2015 and 2017 to the current dataset in 2019. And more importantly, areas have improved that have the greatest impact on recommending the international study experience, ensuring over time a better fit between student expectations and institutional programs.

A key outcome is the importance of employability for the retention of international students. Whether students decide to stay in Canada, return to their home country or go to a third country, when sufficiently prepared for the next move after graduation, they will become brand ambassadors for the region. An important reminder is the fact that **Future Career Impact** is the crucial factor for deciding to study in Atlantic Canada and #1 for students' happiness.

The perception around how inexpensive Nova Scotia is needs to change. Room for improvement is around the expectations for the cost of living

MORE ATTENTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOM AND MAKING LOCAL CONNECTIONS IS ESSENTIAL

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

The perception around how inexpensive Nova Scotia is needs to change. Room for improvement is around the expectations for the cost of living (-7.1% in a global comparison), the quality of housing (-6.4%) and the ease of finding accommodation (-4.9%). Not unexpectedly, transport links score very low too (-20.6%); this is an area where expectations need to be managed upfront.

Another area for attention is the need for more resources to help students integrate into and feel connected to their communities. The connection to the host culture scores below the global benchmark (-0.2%), making friends with Nova Scotia students is low (73.9% = +0.9% above global benchmark), making friends with students from their home country scores low (85.6% = +0.4% above global benchmark) and making friends with other international students' scores below the global benchmark (83.4% = -3.9% below the global benchmark). More attention to the international classroom and making local connections is essential. This project was made possible through funding from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. We would like to thank all participating members and our funders for your continued support.

Conclusion & Recommendation

TOP 10 INFLUENCERS

89%

of students say
that they are happy
with their life at
university/college.

CHOOSING AN INSTITUTION

Globally, 21% of students say that international Alumni helped them to choose their university whereas in Atlantic Canada only 14% of students say that international Alumni played a role in institution selection. Making it safe to say that this is an area worth exploring for the Atlantic Canadian institutions.

**14% OF STUDENTS IN
ATLANTIC CANADA SAY
THAT INTERNATIONAL
ALUMNI HELPED THEM
TO CHOOSE THEIR
UNIVERSITY**

Influencers



HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA • CANADA
(902) 424-8187 • STUDYNOVASCOTIA.CA