

Ontario public colleges'
Standards of practice for international education

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Contents

Part A – Introduction, purpose and scope	3
1. Introduction and purpose	3
2. Scope	4
Part B – Principles	4
Part C – Standards of practice.....	5
Part D – Code administration and reporting.....	9
Schedule 1: List of signatory Ontario colleges	10
Appendix - Legislative framework.....	11

Part A – Introduction, purpose and scope

1. Introduction and purpose

Ontario’s colleges are committed to providing students of all backgrounds with a rewarding post-secondary experience that prepares them for long-term success in their careers.

As the college system has grown and evolved, colleges serve an increasingly diverse student population. As a result, colleges have in place programs and supports that are tailored to suit the diverse needs of students and benefit all students.

In recent years, colleges have expanded their global outreach as greater numbers of international students enrol in Ontario. The province is a recognized world leader in post-secondary education and the colleges’ tremendous success attracting international students is pivotal to Ontario’s long-term prosperity. The commitment to providing quality education for all is greater than ever.

This document builds on the ongoing strengthening of programs and supports for all students by establishing a common set of minimum standards for international student activity. The standards build on existing practices and the legislative and policy framework and quality assurance mechanisms that guide all college activities (details on this framework and quality assurance mechanisms can be found in the appendix). The goal of these standards is to support the well-being of international learners to enhance their opportunities for academic and personal success.

Although the specific programs, initiatives and supports provided to international students will vary according to local circumstances at each college and location where programs are delivered, common standards help clarify the value that all Ontario colleges bring to international students. The system’s commitment to a common standard will strengthen the programs and services for international students to support their progression and success in the post-secondary sector.

2. Scope

Each public college that is a signatory to this document commits to comply with these standards no later than June 2024 and agrees to have these standards included in their regular quality assurance audits to verify compliance. This commitment includes the public college's post-secondary programming that is provided through its private partner (where a partnership exists). The signatory colleges are listed in schedule 1.

Part B – Principles

All signatory colleges commit to be guided by the following principles in their delivery of education to international students. Public colleges that have partnered with private colleges agree that those colleges are also guided by these principles:

- **Student-focused** – Putting students at the centre of all that we do and ensuring their perspectives are considered in decision-making.
- **Professional** – Providing accurate information and demonstrating integrity in relationships with students, potential students and their families, international education agents and all post-secondary education partners.
- **Transparent** – Developing transparent relationships with potential and enrolled students through the open sharing of information that allows students to make informed choices.
- **Collaborative** – Working collaboratively with communities, governments and other parties to support the success of international students.
- **Culturally sensitive and responsive** – Recognizing student diversity in providing supports and services.
- **Accountable** – Acknowledging the college's role in student well-being and success and working with students and partners to address issues as they arise.
- **Continuous improvement** – Seeking feedback on an ongoing basis, assessing the impact of programs and services and adjusting approaches to continuously improve the quality and impact of programs and services.

Part C – Standards of practice

1. Marketing, promotion and admission

Each college signatory commits to:

- 1.1. Undertake marketing of and communication about their academic programs and services that is accurate, consistent with Ontario law and not misleading. This includes not guaranteeing any academic, immigration or employment outcome.
- 1.2. Make accessible to prospective students information to support them to make informed choices about programs suited to their background, goals and aspirations, including information about:
 - 1.2.1 The nature of college education and student responsibilities at Ontario colleges.
 - 1.2.2 Entry requirements, including language proficiency.
 - 1.2.3 Student life in Ontario, including the types and cost of accommodation and the types of part-time work available while studying.
 - 1.2.4 The student profile at the campus at which the program is delivered.
 - 1.2.5 The services the college provides, such as academic supports, health-care services and housing services, as well as related services that may be available in the community.
- 1.3. Recognizing the complexities of international admissions and visa approval processes, endeavour to provide alternative enrolment options when managing program capacity constraints.

2. International education agents

Each college signatory commits to:

- 2.1 Manage its relationships with international education agents and other partners in the marketing and admissions process to support honest business practices that are in the best interests of international students and uphold the reputation of Ontario's post-secondary sector.
- 2.2 Require its agents and other recruitment partners to comply with the standards under marketing, promotion and admission outlined in section 1 and to be transparent with prospective students about the rationale for recommending alternate programs.
- 2.3 Require its international agents to have completed an Ontario college sector-endorsed agent training program.

- 2.4 Monitor the performance of its education agents and other recruitment partners, including terminating contracts with any education agent who has been involved in any serious, deliberate or ongoing conduct that is false, misleading, deceptive or in breach of the law.

3. International student orientation and transition

Comprehensive orientation programs help introduce students to their new communities and build strong foundations for academic success and student well-being.

Each college signatory commits to:

- 3.1 Provide orientation and welcoming initiatives, both prior to and following arrival in Ontario.
- 3.2 Make available information – both before and after arrival – on the services, supports and facilities that the college offers to all students, including those specifically designed for international students. This would include information related to:
 - 3.2.1 Housing and residence options.
 - 3.2.2. Health, safety and mental well-being.
 - 3.2.3 Education/academic progression.
 - 3.2.4 Learning support services, including accessible education services.
 - 3.2.5 Local community integration.
 - 3.2.6 Part-time employment opportunities and federal and provincial government information on employment applicable to international students.
 - 3.2.7 Federal and provincial government information on immigration status of international students and citizenship pathways, including information related to the post-graduation work permit where applicable.
 - 3.2.8 Daily life (e.g., weather, transportation services, housing, child care, communications, personal finance and banking).
- 3.3 Make available information on relevant college policies (e.g., academic policies, information technology use, the students' code of conduct, harassment and bullying policies, anti-racism, sexual harassment and misconduct policies).

4. Standards for supports and services to promote student well-being and safety

International students access the services and supports available to all students attending a given college or program of study. This standard recognizes, however, that many international students require additional or targeted assistance to help them adjust to different cultural environments and interact with diverse persons in Ontario as they pursue their educational goals.

The standard also recognizes that supports and services may be available from the college itself while others may be offered through partnerships or in the broader community. The level of integration of supports will vary by community. Colleges work closely with municipal governments and community partners to support international students to effectively participate in their communities and to receive supports and services that complement the supports offered by colleges.

Each college signatory commits to:

Medical insurance

- 4.1 Ensure that each international student who is enrolled for educational instruction has appropriate insurance covering medical care in Ontario.

Student safety

- 4.2 Take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment on campus and advise international students on actions they can take to enhance their personal security and safety on and off campus, including how to seek assistance and report on an incident that significantly impacts their well-being.
- 4.3 Document critical on-campus safety incidents and remedial action taken by the college.

Health and mental well-being

- 4.4 Provide international students with the opportunity to engage in experiences on-campus, off-campus and/or in the virtual campus to improve their physical and mental health, well-being and safety.
- 4.5 Provide information to students about how to access medical and mental health services through the college or through community and public services, including culturally responsive services where they may be available.

Education/academic progression

- 4.6 Offer academic supports.
- 4.7 Provide professional development opportunities to college staff to help them continuously improve, engage with and support international students.

Anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion

- 4.8 Champion an on-campus environment that is safe and welcoming and fosters greater equity, diversity and inclusion for students from minority groups including racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+ community members and students with disabilities.

5. Standards for post-graduation support services

Each signatory college commits to:

- 5.1 Provide graduating international students who choose to stay in Ontario with federal and provincial government information on immigration, including information related to the post-graduation work permit where applicable, without making any representations as to the currency or accuracy of such information.
- 5.2 Provide graduating students with employment services.
- 5.3 Link graduating students to alumni networks, programs and supports.



Part D – Code administration and reporting

Signatory colleges agree to be regularly audited against these standards as part of the college quality assurance audit process and that the results of these audits will be made publicly available.

Signatory colleges commit to periodically review and update these standards of practice, at least once every five years.

Schedule 1: List of signatory Ontario colleges

1. Algonquin
2. Boréal
3. Cambrian
4. Canadore
5. Centennial
6. La Cité
7. Conestoga
8. Confederation
9. Durham
10. Fanshawe
11. Fleming
12. George Brown
13. Georgian
14. Humber
15. Lambton
16. Loyalist
17. Mohawk
18. Niagara
19. Northern
20. St. Clair
21. St. Lawrence
22. Sault
23. Sheridan

Appendix - Legislative framework

Ontario's public colleges are governed by the [Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#) and [Regulations for the Act: O.Reg. 34/03](#). A policy framework consisting of three types of documents sets out the roles and responsibilities of colleges. These documents include:

- **Minister's binding policy directives** define the ministry's expectations for the college system to comply with the act and regulations.
- **Operating procedures** set out specific requirements and procedures to comply with the act, regulations and/or the minister's binding policy directives.
- **Resource documents** set out suggested or best practices that colleges may choose to use at their discretion.

Foreign nationals seeking to study at a post-secondary institution in Ontario for six months or longer must obtain a study permit. Those wishing to work in Ontario under the post-graduation work permit program must study at a post-secondary institution designated by Ontario as a designated learning institution under the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#). The public colleges that are signatories to this code are designated learning institutions.

Ontario has quality assurance mechanisms that ensure public colleges consistently meet quality standards. The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service is responsible for ensuring quality at both the program level through the credential validation service, as well as at the institutional level through the college quality assurance audit process. The Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board is an Ontario government agency that provides quality assessments and recommendations to the government regarding applications for consent to offer degree programs in Ontario, including those offered by public colleges. This code builds on these program quality assurance mechanisms by identifying additional standards and practices to support international students during their study time at Ontario colleges.

References and key sources

This framework builds on initiatives from other jurisdictions that are popular destinations for international learners, including Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Ontario colleges acknowledge with thanks these sources.

1. **The London statement of principles**

In March 2012, education officials from the U.K., Australia, Ireland and New Zealand issued a joint statement of principles for ethical international student recruitment, commonly known as ‘The London Statement.’ https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/file_download.aspx?id=16942

2. **New Zealand Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021**

New Zealand’s Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 provides guidance for tertiary education providers and schools including the well-being of international learners.

<https://www.education.govt.nz/further-education/information-for-tertiary-students/code-of-practice-pastoral-care-domestic-tertiary/>

3. **Australian International Education and Training Agent Code of Ethics**

Australia’s comprehensive international education and training quality framework, includes an agent code of ethics (ACE). The ACE builds on the London statement’s ethical framework and provides a set of Australian-specific standards for Australia’s education agents.

<https://iibt.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/9-Australian-International-Education-and-Training-Agent-Code-of-Ethics.pdf>

4. **National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018**

The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 sets nationally consistent standards and procedures for registered education providers.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017L01182>

5. **Standards for New Student Orientation Program**

The American Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has established standards, guidelines and rating scales to assess 43 functional areas of student experiences in community colleges and universities. https://www.cas.edu/store_category.asp?id=6