

Developing the Brampton Community Charter

Summit Lessons to Inform the Charter

Priorities and Values

Students should be welcomed, valued, and understood, and their health and well-being prioritized

Providing Support

Keep micro, meso and macro levels of need and support in mind when addressing student issues

Establishing Trust

Build trust with the international student community

Listening

Listen to student experiences and address the root of the problem

Collaboration

Collaboration with community partners and MPs, MPPs and city counselors is important

Student Experience

International students' resilience, and narratives need to be brought forward

Involvement

Involve current students and recent international student graduates in planning and encourage engagement with the community

Inclusion

We need to build our local cultural competence and include international students as key stakeholder in EDI initiatives

Ethical Practices

Regulation, training and monitoring will enhance ethical practices in international student recruitment and retention

Charter

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Guiding Principles

Appreciate that international student experiences are complex, multifaceted, distinctive, and as heterogeneous as the students themselves.

Respect that international students contribute diverse perspectives that enrich the learning experience for all students and are not competing with domestic students for postsecondary spaces.

Recognize the distinct stressors, atypical obstacles and macro and micro level factors that influence the lives of international students.

Acknowledge the need to view the international student experience holistically beginning from when a student considers studying in Canada to beyond graduation.

Define the international student experience to encompass physical, mental, social, cultural, financial, and academic well-being, which includes immigration, employment, housing, health, racism, food security, language and belonging.

Respond through multi-stakeholder engagement to fill the gaps and bridge the silos that challenge a smooth and seamless international student experience.

Goals

1. Ethical recruitment standards
2. Academic and wrap-around supports in the education system
3. Safe and affordable housing
4. Legal and reliable work
5. Well-defined and transparent pathways to citizenship for international students

GOAL 1: Upholding ethical recruitment standards and practices

Recognizing that financial stability is at the heart of the safety and well-being of the international student experience, postsecondary institutions and Charter signatories commit to the following:

- Inform international applicants early and comprehensively about all related expenses, not just tuition and fees
- Encourage and streamline direct application processes. Where agents are involved, ensure processes are in place to only partner with trustworthy and vetted enrolment agents
- Create a public database of unethical agents
- Provide consistency in tuition and fee policy and protection against substantial increases in international student tuition and fees
- Commit to shared data collection on the international student population, including mapping of changing demographics, enrolment patterns, and international student needs.

GOAL 2: Creating academic and wrap-around supports for learners

Recognizing that academic standards and pedagogical relationships vary considerably across cultures, and that international students need accessible guidance on how to navigate the Canadian academic and social environment, postsecondary institutions and Charter signatories commit to the following:

- Create a hub where students can access accurate, trusted information throughout their journey
- Call on all levels of government to adequately fund community-based non-profits that offer mental health and other supports
- Partner with/advocate to other levels of government/the province for collaboration and funding
- Undertake periodic assessments of available health insurance plans and coverage for international students
- Provide culturally appropriate and multi-lingual health care and supports.
- Create trauma-informed best practices for the more severe cases of international students needing urgent help (suicides or attempted suicides, unexpected pregnancies, homelessness, justice system)
- Facilitate the integration of domestic and international students, promote connections to alumni and create positive engagement opportunities between international students and the community, supported by cross-cultural training
- Work to positively shape the messaging and narratives on the international student experience.

GOAL 3: Promoting safe and affordable housing and financial stability

Postsecondary institutions and all levels of government should work with local partners, the development industry and government to ensure access to safe, affordable and accessible housing both on and off campus and commit.

Signatories commit to:

- Consider housing and transportation opportunities for international students as part of municipal planning
- Support the delivery of affordable student housing through streamlined approvals
- Advocate for and promote safe and legal rental accommodation that is subject to inspection and reporting
- Educate property owners on registration of rental units with the municipality to help meet safety standards
- Educate international students on rights and responsibilities under the Landlord and Tenant Act and facilitating access to affordable legal counsel
- Recognize food insecurity as a growing issue among international students and providing targeted support and resources so that learners can afford both rent and groceries
- Commit to making allocations of a percentage of international student tuition and fees revenue to financial scholarships and financial need for international students.

GOAL 4: Providing opportunities for legal and reliable work

Recognizing that many international students work to support their families back home and pay for their tuition/living expenses, Charter signatories commit to the following:

- Develop targeted experiential education and co-op opportunities for international students, keeping in mind their unique challenges when accessing careers and employability support
- Prevent and reduce exploitation of international students through stronger enforcement of provincial labour laws, especially as they relate to temporary work and the gig economy that many international students rely on during their studies
- Inform international students of their rights as workers and offer provision to connect with appropriate legal complaint and advocacy support services
- Educate employers about the benefits of hiring international students and graduates and the immigration regulations that facilitate their employment
- Engage in advocacy with employers, relevant community organizations and all levels of government to improve employment outcomes for international students and graduates

GOAL 5: Championing well-defined and transparent pathways to citizenship for international students.

Recognize the intergovernmental nature of immigration and settlement related issues to improving the international student experience, each level of government should commit to the following:

- Request the federal government to provide timely, accurate and plain-language information on immigration-related matters including student visas and applications, arrival information, entitlements, and responsibilities, work regulations during and post study, and application for permanent residency and citizenship.
- Request the provincial government to provide clarity to post-secondary graduates on dates and application procedures through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (ONIP) program.
- Partner with the regional/municipal government to provide increased access to and awareness of recreational, community safety/wellbeing and public health opportunities to ensure a safe and successful transition to permanent residency.

Accountability Measures

Invest in regular data collection from signatories to encourage consistency in data governance and data sharing. Develop systematic reporting of international student profiles in Brampton and Peel Region.

Embed the implementation, monitoring and accountability of this charter within existing structures.

Develop a self-reporting system for signatories to share the investment, implementation, and monitoring of progress toward the calls to action annually.

Introduce recognition measures to celebrate, reinforce and share best practice models.

Commit to promoting continued conversations, fostering constructive dialogue, and advancing mutual learning by sharing insights, good practices, and data-driven reporting on the implementation of the Charter by all signatories. Sharing is envisioned through summits, workshops, and other efforts to strengthen inter-institutional communities of practice.

Publish the Charter and associated links on the websites of all signatories.