

# Canadian universities attract more international students

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*More than half a million students from home and abroad study in Canada. Last autumn saw record enrolments. The universities in particular offer a complete range of education programmes from undergraduate level to postdoctoral research. Among the attractions are well-equipped laboratories and extensive reference libraries, modern campuses with cultural and business links with their local communities, facilities for sports and other activities, and often 'teaching assistantship', a versatile means of offsetting tuition fees and living expenses. Students are confident of an exhilarating environment in which to pursue their chosen subject. Heather Marshall, a freelance writer from Aylmer, Quebec, reviews Canadian post-secondary education and assesses the vital future role universities will play in business and society...*

As Canadians look forward toward the 21st century, they are increasingly conscious of the critical role universities will play in ensuring the country's well-being.

Cyclical economic uncertainty, changing attitudes toward women's roles and the challenge to meet the needs of a technological and information-based society have dictated that more people than ever before pursue a university education.

This is reflected in the rapid growth of student enrolment across Canada over the last decade. The 89 member institutions that make up the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada today boast a student population in excess of 500 000.

Their soaring numbers reflect the changes taking place in Canadian society. Women undergraduates outnumber men and, as the baby boom generation ages, there are more middle-aged students, some of them old enough to have children of their own with degrees.

In response to the demands of the information age, there has been a striking rise in part-time student numbers as working people return to school to upgrade their skills and improve their

employment prospects. There has been a boom in business studies, an indication of the country's declining reliance on primary industries based on its abundant natural resources.

Another consequence has been the growing awareness among academics, politicians and the business community of the need to invest in scientific research and development to meet the challenges of the next century.

For all their flexibility and ability to change with the times, Canadian universities have not sacrificed standards. They all share a commitment to excellence in education.

'Higher education is the key to Canada's economic future', says Claude Lajeunesse, president of AUCC. 'Canadian universities are committed to a standard of excellence that will allow them to develop the leading thinkers and innovators of tomorrow'.

The respect universities enjoy in Canada today is in large part because of the solid foundation on which the system was built. While the universities mirror the various languages, cultures and philosophies of all the societies which make up Canada's multi-cultural mosaic, they were influenced in their development by European models found in France, Germany, England and Scotland.

There is a determination on the part of both the Canadian and British university communities to ensure those historical links are not only maintained but strengthened. The Canadian High Commission in London and the British Council in Canada work closely to coordinate academic exchanges and joint cooperative activities with universities in Great Britain. Whether it be faculty members from the University of British Columbia trading jobs for a term with colleagues from Cambridge, student exchanges between Regina and Belfast, special scholarships for commonwealth students or joint research projects in applied linguistics involving l'Université Laval and Birkbeck College, University of London, academic ties between the United Kingdom and Canada will continue to be strong.

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Photo: Michael Hellyer