

2019/2020  
International Student  
Barometer Data

***nsc***



# What Attracts International Students to NSCC

In Fall 2019, NSCC participated for the 5<sup>th</sup> time in the International Student Barometer (ISB). The ISB is a benchmarking survey aimed at providing higher education institutions, regions and countries with information concerning their international students in a multitude of aspects in comparison to both national and international benchmarks. The 2019 ISB surveyed in total 179,950 international students, of which 4,606 in Atlantic Canada, and 426 international students from NSCC. In Atlantic Canada 10 higher education institutions participated in the project, run for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time by Edunova. The project was cost-shared by the institutions and ACOA. The average response rate for Atlantic Canada was 27%, NSCC outperformed the other 9 Atlantic Canadian institutions with a soaring response rate of 54%.

The 3 key factors for international students to opt for study at NSCC are '*Opportunities for work experience/work placements as a part of my studies*' (96%), '*Cost of study*' (96%), and '*Future career impact*' (95%). Throughout the survey the importance of employability stands out, whether it is for recommendation of the study experience, as a decision-making factor to opt for NSCC or for the happiness of students while studying at NSCC. The current generation of students makes study decisions with the world of work in mind – any institution, or region, that is able to support that step will benefit with regard to future student recruitment.

Creating a good fit between student expectations and the actual study experience is important to turn your international students into your brand ambassador alumni. NSCC does remarkably well here, scoring a global number 1 position for recommendation. Understanding what attracts international students to opt for a study destination and what will make them recommend the experience to others is key. For students choosing NSCC, employability is pivotal. The fact that 88% of final year students say that NSCC has prepared them well for their career goals shows NSCC 'delivers on its promise'.

**“The current generation of students makes study decisions with the world of work in mind – any institution, or region, that is able to support that step will benefit with regard to future student recruitment.”**

Understanding where NSCC outperforms the various ISB benchmarks helps to recognize the strengths of the institution in a regional, national and global comparison.



## Learning & Teaching

NSCC is performing well in the learning area as a whole. There seems to be a good fit between what students expect from their learning experience and what they actually experience.



## Learning Spaces

The 'learning spaces' at NSCC are highly appreciated by students, leading to a number 1 position in comparison with the other Atlantic Canadian institutions.



## Pre-arrival & Orientation

NSCC does extremely well in the arrival process. Particularly, 'pre-arrival information', 'local orientation' and 'study sense' (i.e. providing students with a clear roadmap at the outset of their studies) do well.



## Employability & Work

Employability is a key area for students and NSCC seems to have understood this, with a highly satisfactory score on the survey question around 'learning that will help me get a good job'.



# Learning & Teaching

NSCC is performing very well in the learning area as a whole. There seems to be a good fit between what students expect from their learning experience at the College and what they actually experience when studying at NSCC. The ISB results show some high scores for NSCC in this area. Survey questions around *'the teaching ability of faculty members'*, *'the academic content of my program/studies'* and *'the organization and smooth running of the course'* contribute to this high score. Additionally, with over 90% satisfaction and a global ranked 4<sup>th</sup> place for learning in general, NSCC has a reason to be proud, particularly as the learning experience is the key area of any (international) study experience.

**“ There seems to be a good fit between what students expect from their learning experience at the College and what they actually experience when studying at NSCC.”**

The good results of NSCC in the learning and teaching area are complemented by strong open comments from students. Such as the one from a Nigerian student who says: “Wow! I have a lot to say about the learning experience, prof X is such a great guy with wealth of knowledge on this “program...” I had a high expectation before coming to NSCC, due to the fact that I have experienced academic teaching from several faculties while studying in the UK and India. And I must testify that my expectations were met! And not a chance, do I regret that I am here at NSCC.”

In the analysis of the ISB data, we have used students' satisfaction scores (for each of the Arrival, Learning, Living and Support elements) and calculated the correlation with their score for their 'likelihood to recommend' their university. In this way, 'Derived Importance' helps identify which factors have the greatest impact on students, and on them recommending the university to others. For NSCC 'employability' has the highest derived importance score in the learning area of the ISB.

“The high scores in the learning area for the different questions lead to a high overall score, on average NSCC scores 2<sup>nd</sup> in Atlantic Canada and a 4<sup>th</sup> place in the global comparison. The single question about ‘how satisfied are you at this stage of the year with your learning experience’, NSCC scores equally high.”

## Teaching Ability

Teaching ability, the process of sharing knowledge with your students, of NSCC faculty members score high at 91.1% satisfaction and seems to be much valued.



**#2 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#5 in Canada**  
**#8 in the World**

## Program Organization

The organization and smooth running of the program seem to score extremely well with 91.3% satisfaction, making students pleased with the experience.



**#2 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#4 in Canada**  
**#4 in the World**

## Program Content

Delivering knowledge is imperative of education, hence when your students score the academic content of the program at 94.4% satisfaction, you have as a college succeeded in your aim.



**#2 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#3 in Canada**  
**#3 in the World**

## Learning Support

*‘Getting time from faculty members when I need it/personal support with learning’* is an important measure to show that students are getting the support they need.



**#3 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#4 in Canada**  
**#4 in the World**



## Learning Spaces

The learning environment at NSCC is appreciated by students. The quality of the learning spaces scores high with 95.8% satisfaction. Likewise, the learning facilities such as libraries, the learning management systems (LMS), the supporting learning technology such as PCs and the computer network, all score well, certainly when compared within Canada. But within a global comparison there is room for improvement within the digital learning environment, in particular with regard to the learning management systems (LMS). Students have high expectations in this area, simply expecting it 'to work'.

**“... there is room for improvement within the digital learning environment, in particular with regard to the LMS. Students have high expectations in this area, simply expecting it 'to work'.”**

The physical library facilities score high in a Canadian comparison with a satisfaction of 90.1%, but within a global context, it is clear this is a rather competitive area, as the benchmark shows there is room for improvement.

Interestingly, this may be related to the fact that students not 'just' expect books in a library but see it as their study area, expecting it to be open long hours and also have “*good wifi, enough computers, excellent learning spaces, quiet rooms and excellent coffee*”, which may not be the key focus of the library services at NSCC.



## Learning Spaces

The 'quality of the learning spaces' at NSCC are appreciated by students, scoring a high 95.8% satisfaction.

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**#1 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#4 in Canada**  
**#9 in the World**



## Digital Learning

The digital learning environment is rated high on average, although in a global comparison the learning management systems offer some room for improvement.

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**#4 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#10 in Canada**  
**#52 in the World**



## Physical Library

The physical library scores high in a Canadian comparison with a satisfaction rate of 90.1%, but within a global context, there is room for improvement.

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**#3 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#8 in Canada**  
**#77 in the World**



## Pre-arrival & Orientation

The overall satisfaction with the arrival phase at NSCC for international students is high (39% of students have answered here 'very satisfied' vs 24% of students giving the same answer in the global benchmark), leading to an 11<sup>th</sup> place in the global comparison for all the arrival questions. NSCC does particularly well around the pre-arrival information, the local orientation and study sense, each scoring a #1 within Atlantic Canada. The only exception that stands out negatively is the information being provided in the arrival phase around the accommodation and living orientation.

Moreover, this is in line with the global comparisons in the living area around 'housing quality' (where NSCC becomes number 120 out of a global benchmark of 183 institutions), 'accommodation access' (#129 out of 183) and 'living cost' (#99 out of 183). In comparison with the other Atlantic Canadian institutions, these scores look OK (as NSCC scores #3 out of 8), however this is an area where there is room for improvement for NSCC. Maybe this is related to 'breaking the myth' that Halifax is an inexpensive place for international students to live. The data shows Halifax and surrounding areas are neither inexpensive, nor is it easy to find a place to live if you are looking for short-term rentals. Managing the expectations upfront of your international student cohort pays off in situations like this, when it is difficult to have swift and comprehensive solutions in place.

**“Managing the expectations upfront of your international student cohort pays off in situations like this, when it is difficult to have swift and comprehensive solutions in place.”**

This is not necessarily an NSCC issue, but an area where the Halifax region would benefit as a whole. Looking at good practice and what has worked elsewhere, it seems to pay off to provide transparent information, even when the message is not favourable, e.g. not enough/tiny/expensive/faraway rooms. In the end it works in favor of the satisfaction and recommendation score of the institution.





## Formal Welcome

The formal welcome at Nova Scotia Community College is rated very high with a satisfaction rate of 96.1%.

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**#2 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#2 in Canada**  
**#2 in the World**



## Local Orientation

The local orientation, i.e. *'finding my way around the local area'*, in the arrival phase is rated high at 95.0% satisfaction.

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**#1 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#3 in Canada**  
**#3 in the World**



## Pre-arrival

The pre-arrival Information, i.e. *'the information you received from this college before you arrived'*, is rated very high at 94.9%.

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**#1 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#5 in Canada**  
**#10 in the World**



# Employability & Work

Understanding what attracts international students to opt for a study destination and what will make them recommend the experience to others is key for any institution. Over the past years we have seen employability increase in importance. Current day students make study decisions with graduate outcomes in mind. They look for institutions and programs that provide 'learning that will help me get a good job'.

For NSCC, as a community college, the focus on ensuring students feel well prepared for the next step after graduation is pivotal. Particularly given the importance of employability for decision-making, satisfaction, happiness as well as recommendation of today's student cohort. Advice and guidance on long-term job opportunities and careers

from faculty members is important here. Likewise, studying in an international classroom with people from other cultures supports the goal of an international study experience, and NSCC satisfaction score of 94.6% and #1 place in the Atlantic Canadian comparison support the high score here of NSCC.

**“Current day students make study decisions with graduate outcomes in mind. They look for institutions and programs that provide ‘learning that will help me get a good job.’”**

However, employability is not “just a career workshop” towards the end of the curriculum. The data help us to understand that to truly support students in their career goals, employability can best be integrated into the curricula, allowing students to think about their future career and supporting them with their next step into the global world of work. 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 NSCC and Atlantic Canada.



## Employability

Employability is a key area for current day students and NSCC scores high (93.2%) when providing students with *“learning that will help me get a good job”*.

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**#2 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#4 in Canada**  
**#4 in the World**



## Work Experience & Placement

Work Experience helps build employability skills, NSCC scores above average here at 87.3% satisfaction for *‘opportunities for work experience / work placements as a part of my studies’*.

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**#1 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#3 in Canada**  
**#4 in the World**



## Career Advice

Careers advice (with a satisfaction of 87.5%) coming from faculty members is an important feature to build confidence amongst NSCC students about their employability.

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**#2 in Atlantic Canada**  
**#4 in Canada**  
**#5 in the World**

# Recommendation Highlights

With a number 1 score globally on recommendation, NSCC seems to attract the right students to its institution and seems to “deliver on its promise to students.” Students choosing NSCC find employability and a job upon graduation important, this shows in their recommendation scores.

Creating a good fit between student expectations and the actual study experience is important to turn your international students into your brand ambassadors. There is a large group of international students that are willing to actively recommend their experience at NSCC. Still there is room for improvement in this area as international alumni are not yet seen as a major influencing force for future students at 16% only, whereas the website at 57% scores highest in helping students

make a choice for NSCC. There is a clear opportunity for NSCC to engage these alumni more in international recruitment campaigns.

**“Creating a good fit between student expectations and the actual study experience is important to turn your international students into your brand ambassadors.”**

International students make a very conscious decision when going abroad for their higher education. In making their choice for NSCC, the Atlantic Canadian region is an important attraction factor. Again, linked to the next step after graduation, with 88% saying their study experience prepared them well for their career goals.



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## #1 overall in the World

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NSCC scores a global number 1 position for recommendation. Understanding what attracts international students to opt for a study destination and what will make them recommend the experience to others is key. For students choosing NSCC employability seems pivotal and with 88% of final year students saying they feel well-prepared for their career goals (#2 globally) NSCC does well in this area.

## The Context

The International Student Barometer enables higher education institutions to track and compare satisfaction levels of their international students and to identify specific areas of key importance to them. Most importantly, it helps identify whether students would recommend the institution to others.



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