

Mapping Program-to-Labour Market Success for International Students and Graduates: Community Focus, Ontario Impact

Project Team: Fleming College

As job-market pressure grows and Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) eligibility shifts in Ontario, it is increasingly important to understand how efficiently international students transition into the workforce and the extent to which their employment aligns with their field of study. Conducting in-depth research on the relationship between international graduates and the current labour market is essential for informing policy development that aligns with the economic needs of Ontario's communities.

Research Questions and Methodology

This study aimed to identify the employment situations of international students and graduates in the Ontario labour market and examine the relationship between their postsecondary programs and employment outcomes. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Where do international students work, and how closely is international student employment related to existing programming?
2. Where do international graduates work, and how well does graduate employment align with postsecondary programming?

Between fall 2023 and fall 2024, Fleming College surveyed 3,919 full-time upper-semester international students regarding their education, current employment status and post-graduation employment intentions. Researchers also identified international graduates through the College's LiveAlumni dataset and used the Government of Ontario's College Graduate Outcome Survey (CGOS) to access graduates' employment data.

Findings and Recommendations

Approximately 60% of respondents of the 22-item survey strongly agreed that they chose their current program because it would prepare them to obtain a PGWP after completing their studies. Thirty-six percent of respondents agreed that the number of job opportunities in Ontario was an important factor that impacted their decision to come to the province. These results highlight that perceived future employment success — including obtaining a job in a related field

or obtaining a PGWP after program completion — is a crucial factor in international students' program choices.

Almost 60% of respondents reported that they worked while completing their studies, and 95% of the non-working respondents were actively looking for work. For those who were working, only 3% had an occupation related to their program of study. The key factors behind international students' decision to seek employment were income support (64%) and opportunities to connect with community (39%).

Analysis of the LiveAlumni database showed that 64% of international graduates from Fleming College secured employment opportunities in Ontario. CGOS data showed that 83% of international graduates were actively employed and 15% were employed in an occupation related to their program of study; 78% of those employed in fields related to their program were working in education, law, social, community and government occupations, while 1% were working in sales and service occupations. Graduates that completed PGWP-eligible programs were more likely to be employed in occupations related to their programs (32%) compared to those that completed non-PGWP-eligible programs (8%). These findings indicate that although the majority of international graduates surveyed were working, most of them were not situated in industries aligned with their programs of study.