

Recruiting International Students in India: A Good Practices Guidebook

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**Association of Universities
and Colleges of Canada**

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Introduction

In April 2009, AUCC launched a research project to identify “good practices” in international student recruitment, with a particular emphasis on acceptance and admissions methods, as well as advising and counseling students in the study permit application process. This project was in response to a recommendation by AUCC’s Standing Advisory Committee on International Relations (SACIR), and subsequently identified as a valuable initiative for collaboration between AUCC and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) by its Deputy Minister at the time, Richard Fadden, in his meeting with SACIR.

We chose India as the focus for this project because it is a growing source of qualified students and because a wide range of Canadian universities are interested in expanding recruitment activities there. Due to the complex nature of the recruitment landscape there, India is at the heart of new and emerging approaches and techniques in international student recruitment by Canadian universities.

CIC has also initiated work in identifying good practices in recruitment and has requested input from the multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee on International Students and Immigration (ACISI). The AUCC research project, with a particular focus on Canadian universities, was designed to complement CIC’s broader efforts.

This is designed to be an evergreen document that will be posted on-line and be updated as Canadian university recruitment activities in India evolve and new innovative approaches are adopted.

Methodology

The analysis of five representative case studies of AUCC member institutions and their recruitment activities in India constituted the main component of AUCC’s research. We selected these five cases in part based on assessments from CIC officers in India.

We prepared a questionnaire to obtain specific information on each of the Canadian institutions’ recruitment experience in India. Much of the survey focused on recruitment techniques, counseling practices, due diligence and document verification approaches, and working with local representatives (e.g. education agents or with a preferred local representative.)

In addition to the survey of selected universities, we conducted an environmental scan of existing materials to augment the research and obtained feedback on institutional good practice from existing CIC-led research and CIC statistics. Discussions were also held with CIC officers in Canada and abroad, along with representatives from overseas recruitment organizations that provide services to Canadian universities. (See Annex A for a list of institutions and interviewees.)

Institutional Profiles: Recruiting in India

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

SFU has been engaged in India since 2005. Its activities include exchange opportunities, field schools, recruitment visits and education agent partnerships. Its approach to recruitment is fairly broad with participation at a range of education fairs and related school visits as well as visits with education agents. India is a major focus for SFU with ongoing efforts to expand relationships. Student recruitment at the undergraduate level is the primary focus of SFU's activities although there are also limited collaborative research activities, usually linked to interests of specific faculty. There are also some student exchange/co-op positions available for SFU students in India. Development cooperation initiatives are limited.

Student recruitment is a major part of SFU's engagement strategy. Most university efforts are focused on direct student recruitment but this can be reinforced and strengthened e.g. by alumni connections, student mobility programs, co-op placements and faculty connections. All program areas work cooperatively to ensure quick acceptance of students.

SFU perceives that the institution is not yet well known in India but efforts are being made, through agents, visits, alumni activities and advertising, to increase the profile of the university. In an effort to increase visibility and contact in India, the university visits as part of an education fairs circuit, generally once a year. SFU's associated institution Fraser International College (FIC) (a private institution on SFU's campus which provides foundation year training for international students) visits twice a year. In addition there are visits to SFU's campus by Indian educators usually twice a year. SFU always

makes it a practice to call on the Canadian High Commission during their India visits. SFU's strategy for India also seeks to engage the Indo-Canadian community in steering and enhancing the many linkages with India in the areas of student mobility, faculty engagement, collaborative research and service.

SFU views the institution's key strengths as providing personalized support to international students from initial application through the registration process to admittance. In addition SFU has a strong reputation in Canada and internationally although more work remains to be done in India.

According to CIC statistics, SFU had a total of 26 new study permits processed in 2008 in India and an approval rate of 88 percent. (*See CIC data table in Annex C*)

UNIVERSITY of WINDSOR

The University of Windsor has been active in India since 1999 with a broad range of engagement, particularly in student recruitment activities, working extensively through the Canadian University Application Centre (CUAC)¹. Windsor's focus on India is part of the university's overall institutional strategy and is a high priority in the strategy. Criteria used to determine Windsor's relationship with India include research linkages/collaboration, academic connections and advice from CUAC.

Student recruitment is the most important aspect of Windsor's relationship with India. Recruitment takes place primarily at the undergraduate level and represents about 75 percent of the university's engagement with India in addition to collaborative research activities, student exchanges and development cooperation initiatives.

The University of Windsor is well known in India particularly because of its work through CUAC. Windsor faculty and staff visit 3 or

¹ The Canadian University Application Centre is the overseas operation of the Toronto based Canadian company, Higher-Edge. The CUAC represents a number of Canadian universities or their individual programs in India and acts as a recruiting and consulting organization. It has five offices in India.

4 times a year and always meet with High Commission staff and CUAC which represents the university there. Indian visits to Canada are less frequent but happen about twice a year.

Windsor maintains that relationship building is key in India and needs to be done both by its representative overseas and directly by the institution through senior level visits including by the President. Windsor is striving for a long term relationship which has already and will continue to pay dividends.

According to CIC statistics, University of Windsor had the highest total of new study permits processed in 2008 in India – 197 – and an approval rate of 87 percent.

McGILL UNIVERSITY

McGill has been active in India for several years with a broad interest in many parts of the country. Indian students constitute the fifth largest group of international students at McGill. India, therefore, is a priority market for recruitment as part of McGill's international education strategy. A number of factors were taken into account in assessing the importance of the relationship with India including existing academic and research linkages as well as the growing number of Indian students interested in attending McGill.

McGill estimates that about 40 percent of the overall relationship with India is based on student recruitment which is largely focused on undergraduates (with limited room for growth) although post graduate recruitment is a growth area with additional staff having been hired to promote the faculty. Other areas of engagement include collaborative research, student exchanges and development cooperation initiatives. There is potential for further engagement through a McGill alumni branch and branch contact person in

India which may assist in profile-raising and indirectly, in student recruitment.

Although student recruitment is only one part of McGill's engagement strategy it is a very important activity as it reinforces other aspects of the relationship such as joint research and alumni activities. McGill perceives the institution to be very well known in India, reinforced by its international reputation and underscored in India by the alumni office.

The institution is well known in India and the university has some 600 alumni living there, among them, the daughter and son-in-law of Prime Minister Singh. For financial reasons, recruitment visits to India are usually limited to once a year, often as part of the Canadian Higher Education Committee (CHEC)² recruitment tours. McGill typically visits a target recruitment country three years in a row and then conducts an assessment on recruitment success (quality of applicant pool and registration yield rate). There are very few visits by Indian school representatives to the McGill campus mainly because of limited budgets. Visits to India always include meetings at the Canadian High Commission often as part of the CHEC group program. These sessions are viewed as fundamental in relationship building.

McGill assesses that its key strength is its existing international reputation. Working with and through the CHEC, and establishing sustained links with, for example, guidance counselors in India, have been successful in establishing McGill's high standards and credibility.

According to CIC statistics, McGill had the fifth highest total of new study permits processed in 2008 in India – 55 – and an approval rate of 100 percent.

² Canadian Higher Education Committee is a service committee for Canadian institutions which are members of the Council of International Schools. It organizes recruitment tours, conference activities and communications for its members.

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

Saint Mary's has been active in India since the 1980s with work promoting the university's MBA program. While earlier engagement tended to be concentrated in specific programs (like the MBA), the relationship today is much more broadly focused — indeed, India is one of the top 10 countries of focus for Saint Mary's.

A number of criteria were used in determining whether and how to establish a strategic relationship with India including a review of visits to and from, faculty exchanges and collaborative research initiatives. The foundation of the current relationship is very much centered on student recruitment and primarily at the undergraduate level (75 percent) — it is clearly the main focus and influences all other aspects of the overall relationship.

Saint Mary's has worked to make itself well known in the Punjab where many of its students originate and also in New Delhi but it remains less known elsewhere except possibly within the expatriate community. Saint Mary's is able to undertake two recruitment visits a year (sometimes as part of the CHEC tour) and an additional separate Deans' visit once a year. As part of these visits calls and meetings are always arranged with the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi as well as Consulates General in Mumbai, Chandigarh and Bangalore. Meetings are also arranged with the Canadian University Application Centre which represents Saint Mary's in India. Due to limited funding, it has been difficult to underwrite the cost of Indian visitors to Halifax although such visits are welcome and programs can be arranged.

In assessing its key strengths in the Indian market, Saint Mary's sees its partnership with CUAC as a major factor in its success. In addition, staff conclude that Saint Mary's must have an ongoing presence and visibility in India, that Indian students expect and must be provided with a high level of service. St. Mary's recruiters also believe that it is important to be a part of the promotion of the Canada brand.

According to CIC statistics, Saint Mary's had a total of 29 new study permits processed in 2008 in India and an approval rate of 86 percent.

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Memorial's engagement with India began in 1999 primarily on a recruitment basis although also through academic connections in the business and engineering programs. The university's current emphasis remains broad and, in the context of Memorial's international education strategy, India has been identified as one of the top 5 priority countries. The decision to concentrate effort and attention on India reflects a recognition of the growing importance of India as an education source and world economic power.

The Memorial relationship with India is about 50 percent based on student recruitment — with a largely undergraduate emphasis. Student recruitment is therefore an important part of the overall engagement strategy with India.

Memorial perceives that the university is not that well known in India but is working hard to raise its profile. This is accomplished in part by regular recruitment visits (2 to 3 times a year) which include meetings with students, their parents and education agents. Visits to the Canadian High Commission are also included whenever possible. Limited funding precludes many visits by Indian education representatives to Canada but these do take place every couple of years.

Memorial perceives that its key strengths are safety and location, the quality and comprehensiveness of programs with particular strengths in areas of high international student interest such as business and MBA programs.

According to CIC statistics, Memorial had a total of 26 new study permits processed in 2008 in India and an approval rate of 85 percent.

Good Practices in International Student Recruitment: Findings

The main focus of this document is identifying good practices in acceptance and admissions methods, as well as in advising and counseling students about the study permit application process. There is also some assessment of the front-end of recruitment – marketing and promotion – as well as organizational factors at the institutions.

This section outlines the main findings as they relate to the themes of the questionnaire sent to the selected case-study institutions and identifies a set of good practices based on:

- Responses of representatives from the case-study institutions;
- CIC research through the ACISI process;
- Input of experienced practitioners on the ground in India such as the Canadian University Advisory Centre (CUAC) and the New Delhi office of the Canadian Education Centre Network (CECN)³; and
- Input from Citizenship and Immigration officers both in Canada and India

1. Marketing Tools

What marketing tools (tailored website, direct contact, social networking, education fairs, use of education agents, school visits, use of alumni, contacts through academic linkages, establishment of local business offices) have been most successful in attracting interest on the part of Indian students?

Findings

Most universities use the array of marketing tools listed above. Direct contact with students through education fairs remains a crucial activity for most institutions as well as enhancing and tailoring the web presence for the Indian market. Given the increasing use of the internet by students for research on study destinations, promotional material is increasingly used to direct students to websites. Other broader visibility building activities remain valuable as well such as being integrated into provincial trade missions and Premier's visits as was the case with Simon Fraser.

Marketing to the right target audience in the first instance is an important ingredient in achieving effective and efficient recruitment efforts. Directing promotional activities to an appropriate category of students necessitates thorough market intelligence. DFAIT's new Edu-Canada Pro resource site is a useful tool in the search for this type of information to inform recruitment activities, such as listings of upcoming fairs under the Edu-Canada initiative: <http://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/edu-canadapro/eng/home.jsp>

There is already a significant amount of market research on India including information on target schools through DFAIT, the High Commission in Delhi and other organizations operating in India. Where individual institutions may benefit is by conducting market research and expanding recruitment

³ As of January 2010, the New Delhi office of CECN ceased operations indefinitely.

efforts beyond the traditional market areas such as New Delhi, Punjab, Mumbai and Bangalore into areas such as southern India. In addition, there may be merit in exploring the prospect of cost sharing marketing and promotional materials that describe the Canadian university system and making them available in local languages. DFAIT's Edu-Canada branding and marketing initiative: www.educationau-incanada.ca along with some provincial government promotion measures, may also provide new resources in the future for recruitment in India.

Good Practice

It is imperative to use a range of tools in the initial promotion stages with a focus on a sophisticated web presence including new social networking tools. This must be balanced with on-going efforts for direct contact with students. High quality and relevant market intelligence gathered by the institution or a representative on the ground will help define an appropriate targeted audience for marketing and can avoid needless complications in the application process.

2. Organization and Staffing

Once awareness has been raised, does your institution have dedicated staff to handle applications from international students? Indian students in particular?

Findings

All respondents have staff that are solely dedicated to handling international student applications and can therefore provide a high level of consistent service. However, due to the limited nature of activities and continued low level of volume there are no staff dedicated specifically to Indian students. Entering into a business arrangement with a representative or advising organization is another option. Saint Mary's and Windsor have contracted their India applications system to the Canadian University Application Centre (CUAC) which has staff on the ground in India. This service handles all enquiries up to and including the application stage and those which have been made directly to the university.

Good Practice

Staff who are trained and experienced in handling international student enquiries is the standard. As the level of effort and volume increases institutions have to ensure they allocate appropriate staff to deal with the very complex nature of the Indian market. For institutions with a higher degree of engagement in India, establishing a representative arrangement with an organization such as the CUAC has proved to be an effective option.

3. Staff Location

Are admissions staff located in one administrative unit of the institution or spread amongst more than one?

Findings Reflecting individual organizational structures, some institutions have centralized their admissions staff for domestic and international students and other institutions work on a more decentralized model. McGill, as an example, brings together its admission hubs from across the institution through a Recruitment Advisory Committee.

Good Practice There is no “one-size-fits-all” practice in this situation. However, there could be advantages to centralizing international admissions staff as much as possible in order to build specialized staff expertise and to share good practices. A coordinating body could also be helpful in accomplishing these goals in a decentralized model.

4. Staff Training on the Immigration Act

What kind of training does staff receive/have they received on the Immigration Act and Regulations particularly related to how study permits are issued?

Findings In-house staff advising international students receive various levels of training and are expected to be familiar with the Immigration Act (IRPA) and Regulations. CUAC staff working in India in support of Canadian clients are highly trained in the study permit process. CIC has identified a role for the department in explaining study permit requirements through a targeted system of outreach to institutions. A particular focus of CIC work has been in clarifying communications on “dual intent” to assist institutions and students to understand their options and responsibilities. See: www.cic.gc.ca/EnGLISH/study/institutions/intent.asp

Good Practice Both recruitment and admissions staff should be well versed on the IRPA including OP12, the part of the Operations Manual dealing with students and also be current with the number of positive changes introduced by CIC over the last few years.

www.cic.gc.ca/ENGLISH/resources/manuals/op/op12-eng.pdf

Staff dealing with applications from India should be very familiar with the information contained on the High Commission website.

<http://vfs-canada.co.in/images/StudentChecklist.pdf>

5. Education Agents

Does your institution work with appointed education agents in India? If so, how are they selected and how is due diligence or training conducted?

Findings

Responses varied significantly amongst surveyed institutions. Some institutions, as a matter of university policy, do not work with education agents. Some such as Memorial and Simon Fraser have engaged agents over the years with satisfactory results. The CUAC, which some schools work with, has a policy of not working with education agents. There is a high potential for fraud in India and the reputation of education agents in India is decidedly mixed. However education agents are part of the marketing landscape in India and many institutions have elected to engage in a commercial relationship. The British Council has a searchable database of agents for use by institutions choosing to work with agents.
www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-agents-zone.htm

CIC has indicated a willingness to working with institutions to include standard clauses in institution-agent agreements to improve outcomes.

Good Practice

Institutions should choose education agents with the utmost care and due diligence as bad choices can affect their reputation, particularly in relation to the High Commission visa section. Information on agent integrity and reliability should be sought from other post secondary institutions, and where possible through discussion with trade officials from the High Commission.

6. Improving Education Agents

If you work with education agents is your institution generally satisfied with the results? Are there activities or initiatives which could be undertaken to improve the performance of education agents?

Findings

For those institutions that work with education agents, there has been general satisfaction and results are regularly monitored. SFU noted that the recently revitalized BC Council for International Education is working to identify effective strategies for working with agents. Memorial has adapted some administrative approaches to facilitate work with agents such as developing a fee structure to ensure that it gets applications from quality students. CIC recognizes that education agents are part of the market place and has indicated that the most important thing is for institutions to ensure that the agent is paid not just for issuing a visa but for having a student arrive on campus to study. Education agent training programs such as those provided by the British Council, while not currently the practice, would be helpful. The CEC Network office in India has organized agent training workshops in the past in New Delhi, Hyderabad, Chandigarh and Bangalore which attracted representatives from carefully screened agencies.

Good Practice

Thorough research, careful selection and regular monitoring of agents or organizations that represent the institution are the most effective approach to recruiting through agents. To ensure agent and student quality, we recommend structuring the fee payments for agents so that fees are delivered not simply for admission but rather for having the student actually arrive on campus.

7. Local Education Connections

To what extent are local partnership arrangements (with counterpart institutions or K-12 institutions which may stream students) important in creating an awareness of your institution?

Findings

There were few if any formal relationships between Canadian and Indian institutions which might assist in raising profile or serving as a potential pool of international students. While some universities have sought to develop a list of top source schools, they recognize that ultimately the only guarantee is the quality of the individual student. However a number of informal connections have been established usually through regular school visits organized from Canada, through the CUAC office, through CHEC activities or through the CEC Network office.

Good Practice

Competitor countries have found it advantageous to engage in developing solid and sometimes formal relationships with top Indian secondary schools which have established a track record of the sources of students interested in overseas study. Offering scholarships can help raise profile and awareness as can inviting selected senior staff from these schools to visit Canada.

8. Local Business Relationship

Are there other mechanisms, such as establishing a local business relationship, which help achieve recruitment and other university objectives?

Findings

Beyond the use of agents, there are options for engaging an organization to represent the institution on the ground in the market. The main difference between representative organizations such as this and agents is the extent of screening and counseling services that ensure the student is appropriate for consideration for admission by the school. Agents are often collecting fees from students in addition to charging the institution – this has the potential to compromise the assurance of appropriateness of the match between the student and institution.

Consulting services provided by these organizations to the institution, such as the provision of market intelligence, helps ensure that recruitment activities are directed to the appropriate students from the earliest stage of marketing, through the application process and through to the study permit

process. As earlier indicated, some school such as Saint Mary's and Windsor have a formal business relationship with the CUAC which has produced some positive results. The latest CIC statistics confirm positive results for schools making use of these types of services.

Good
Practice

Universities may wish to consider exploring purchasing the services which can be offered by a representative organization such as the CUAC.

9. Visa Application Centres

Is your institution aware of the Visa Application Centres in India and do you recommend that students use these facilities?

Findings

CIC established the VACs on a private contract basis and are located in nine Indian cities (See Annex B for a CIC document listing offices and services). They assist in ensuring that study permit applications are properly and thoroughly completed, on a fee for service basis. These centres are not a screening service. The CUAC office in India works closely with the VAC offices. Many universities are not yet aware of the services provided by the VACs. AUCC has been assisting CIC in its efforts to promote the use of the services of the VACs to help increase completion rates of applicants.

Good
Practice

As even well-educated applicants sometimes make mistakes, institutions should be up to date on the services provided by the VAC offices and consider recommending to applicants that they use these offices as a convenient and reliable check for their applications' completeness.

10. First Contact with Student Applicant

At what point in the student application process does your institution normally have first contact with the Indian student?

Findings

First contact with Indian students by the institutions varies widely amongst institutions. They include: meeting at education fairs or other forms of outreach; referred by education agent; referred by partner institution; information request forwarded directly by the student; and receipt of a formal application from a student.

Of the case-study institutions surveyed:

- McGill indicated that it is usually a direct enquiry as the first contact. It employs a commercially available adapted software package "McGill in Mind" to engage the student through the enquiry and application process;

- Memorial's first contact is often at education fairs or by direct enquiry (Memorial has developed an *Establishing Student Relationship Program* to engage students);
- Simon Fraser's first contact is through a combination of education agents and at education fairs/outreach events — SFU has an *AskSFU* program on its website to respond to students; and
- Saint Mary's and Windsor's first contact is normally through the relationship they have with CUAC and its five offices in India — in these cases student enquirers are able to obtain face-to-face counseling.

Most institutions are able to track student applications electronically and also operate a recruitment yield system designed to monitor the progress of an enquiry with the ultimate objective being to convert an enquiry from a qualified student into a registration.

Good Practice

The objective is to have a comprehensive system in place, including counseling, which can quickly and efficiently identify, track and support those qualified students whose initial enquiry to the institution would most likely result in a formal letter of admission and subsequent registration.

11. Assessing Applications

Once your institution has received a formal application from an Indian student, describe the internal process that then takes place to determine whether your institution will issue a formal Letter of Acceptance (LoA).

Findings

All institutions verify the main criteria for acceptance including: academic credentials, financial capacity, language proficiency and personal recommendations.

- McGill ensures that all documents are verifiable and all students must sign a document confirming the information provided is correct.
- Memorial completes an assessment relative to course being applied for and then refers it to the faculty where it will be ranked according to established criteria. Requests for originals are made to the issuing authority and certified copies are sometimes accepted.
- Simon Fraser admits on the basis of academic credentials and language level and accepts only original transcripts from all applicants except those from appointed agents where copies will be accepted with originals to be provided during first month of classes. Applicants are also required to agree to a terms and conditions button on the application to be processed.

- For both Saint Mary's and Windsor, the CUAC offices in India handle all these questions and, when they have obtained the necessary information and have counseled the student, they recommend that a formal Letter of Acceptance be issued. The CUAC offices in India undertake due diligence on both the applicants and their documents on behalf of both institutions.

Good Practice

Institutional practices vary but all should ensure they verify academic credentials, including language proficiency and financial standing. The High Commission in New Delhi has introduced an updated Study Permit Application kit which can be viewed at:
<http://vfs-canada.co.in/images/StudentChecklist.pdf>

12. Letter of Acceptance

Does your institution use the standardized Letter of Acceptance as contained on the CIC website? If not, what LoA is in use? Do you issue conditional LoAs?

Findings

Most institutions' Letters of Acceptance (LoA) include the content in the standard CIC LoA but are adapted for institutional use. Conditional Letters of Acceptance are often used for students in pending status including those who needed ESL upgrades. AUCC has been assisting CIC in promoting the increased use of standardized Letters of Acceptance and reducing the use of conditional LoAs.

Good Practice

Institutional LoA's must include all the information contained in the CIC standard LoA. Adapting for institutional use does not seem to be a problem but it should conform to the structure of the CIC standardized LoA as outlined here: www.cic.gc.ca/EnGLish/pdf/pub/accl-et-e.pdf

13. Converting a Letter of Acceptance to Registration

Once a formal LoA has been issued what next steps are in place to convert the institution's LoA into student arrival? Is your institution able to track numbers of LoA's issued to, in this case, Indian students?

Findings

Most institutions have several outreach points throughout the process including requirement to pay confirmation deposit. Prospective students are also advised of the various support services available to them and encouraged to be in direct contact with international student services (see First Contact with Students above). Those institutions with a CUAC relationship rely on that office to assist in converting the LoA to a registration. All institutions try to track the letters. In instances where a student in the process of application changes his mind, the University of Windsor informs the visa section at the High Commission.

Good
Practice

Institutions should, where possible, establish the same personalized interactions with international students that they employ to counsel and advise domestic students. Using tracking mechanisms to monitor the process from enquiry to registration and arrival is very helpful. This necessitates some extra contact with the student but also encourages the student to communicate with the institution more regularly and has the benefit of pre-empting any potential problem along the way.

14. Student Counselling

What counseling is provided to the student on the study permit process and by whom? (i.e. the institution, local agent, partner institution, other organization such as the CECN)?

Findings

Counselling is one of the last and often neglected stages in finalizing the recruitment process after the initial promotion, outreach and admission activities. It should include a rigorous review of the package for accuracy and completeness (including financial information) and checked against CIC criteria before being transferred to the visa office at the High Commission. The case-study institutions have varied approaches to this counseling role. All agree that counseling in person is ideal but attention to email correspondence is also effective given the distance and vast territory of the market in India. Some of their approaches include:

- Saint Mary's and Windsor place the counseling of prospective student in the hands of their representative organization – CUAC – which provides comprehensive and repeated counseling sessions to students interested in these institutions (there could be as many as 10 visits by one student to a CUAC office in the lead up to a formal application).
- At McGill, students have access to website information, detailed information in the comprehensive pre-departure guide and in addition, can discuss their interests with the institution's international student services counselor either by phone or email.
- At Simon Fraser counseling is provided by agents for students using recruited by an agent or by International Student Advisors either in person, by phone or by email. SFU has established a target response time of within 24 hours of each enquiry.
- Memorial provides information on an as-needed basis by an international student services counselor.

It is also worth noting the creation of a pilot initiative in India by CIC, in partnership with ACCC, designed to improve the persistently low approval rates at the college level. The visa offices have created a new streamlined process for applications for participating institutions in exchange for follow-

up reporting on student attendance and much more stringent requirement of verifiable supporting documents to come from these applicants.⁴

**Good
Practice**

For institutions which have the resources, an on-the-ground in India counseling capacity is the ideal approach as locally based counselors will be familiar with the Indian as well as Canadian environment. This can be done either through a carefully trained education agent or organizations such as the CUAC.

15. Engagement with the High Commission

To what extent does the institution engage with either or both the High Commission visa section or the local CIC offices?

Findings

Some institutions make an effort to contact the High Commission during their India visits if the school is planning a substantial increase or change in recruitment practices. This helps in obtaining relevant information on potential recruitment activities and gives CIC officers advance notice of possible applicants.

**Good
Practice**

It is imperative that information on all of the institution's programs for which a student may be applying is accessible to visa officers at the high commission when they process applications. The most effective way to accomplish this is to ensure that information on all programs is readily available on the institution's website to help visa officers in their research. In the case of new and particularly innovative programs being developed it would be advisable to contact the visa office to alert them of possible applications to these programs.

⁴ The Student Partners Program is a pilot initiative undertaken from April to Dec. 2009 by the Visa Offices in New Delhi and Chandigarh in partnership with ACCC. The pilot will be assessed after its conclusion in December 2009.

Conclusion

One overriding factor that has affected all institutions' recruitment practices in India is the fact that Canadian institutions are generally not well known in India. The good practices indicated here are necessarily informed by this reality and the fact that India is a highly complex market. Further complicating the recruitment process is the potential for fraud in applications coming from India. This poses a risk to the integrity of the immigration system but also diverts valuable university resources in the processing of fraudulent cases. As such, a sophisticated approach is required to penetrate and resonate in this market. Considerable investment of resources is needed from the earliest stage of marketing to the screening for admission and for counseling through the study permit process.

The analysis of the five universities profiled here confirms that some Canadian institutions are having reasonable success at recruiting students from India. This observation is supported by recent information from the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi that Canadian universities, as of early 2009, were achieving about a 90 percent acceptance rate of study permit applicants (and 95 percent at the graduate level). This confirms that institutions surveyed, as well as most of the Canadian universities active in Indian student recruitment, are already using good practices.⁵ Still, with only 2800 students coming from India to Canada, the overall volume of recruitment remains small. There is also a need to facilitate more graduate level recruitment and mobility, as demonstrated by the AUCC Workshop for Canadian and Indian Deans of Graduate Studies, held in New Delhi in December 2009.

For Canadian universities which may not yet have decided to become active in student recruitment in India the foregoing will provide a useful guide on how best to maximize their efforts.

The role of a third party recruitment organization such as the CUAC or the CEC office in India has also played a role in AUCC members' success. The two surveyed institutions which use CUAC — Saint Mary's and Windsor — were highly complimentary of the organization. They reported that working with CUAC virtually guaranteed the entry of students who had been advised and counseled by that organization. Indeed, both universities have gone so far as to have CUAC take exclusive responsibility for counseling/advising Indian applicants. This means that applications received directly from Indian students to either of the institutions are automatically sent to the CUAC offices in India.

DFAIT's Edu-Canada initiative through the new "Imagine" brand and resources being dedicated to targeted activities in India will assist in raising the profile of Canadian universities. CIC has also taken some important and innovative steps to improve the attractiveness of Canada as has the visa section at the High Commission in Delhi. In addition to improvements to programs such as the Off-Campus and Post-Graduate work permit programs and the creation of the new Canadian Experience Class, there have also been changes designed to simplify the study permit process introduced at the Canadian High Commission in India including the preparation of a Modified Study Permit Application Kit — this can be viewed at <http://vfs-canada.co.in/images/StudentChecklist.pdf>

The opening of additional Visa Application Centres (VACs) is a very positive development which facilitates the processing of students by providing document- checking for all applications for Canada including study permit applicants.

Statistics on processing times for university applicants are not yet available for 2009 but the trend clearly shows processing times are becoming shorter for properly completed

⁵ See CIC study permit processing statistics attached as Annex C.

applications to universities and CIC officials in New Delhi indicate a 2-3 week standard in processing. Moreover, in an effort to decrease processing times further (and as has been recently introduced in China) CIC is also considering implementing the practice of permitting “up-front” medical examinations in advance of the study permit application in India.

Reduced processing times is obviously beneficial to the institution as it reinforces overall marketing efforts in India and helps portray the institution and Canada as welcoming to the Indian student applicant. It also positions Canada and the institution in a more favourable position vis-à-vis international competition. Employing good practices in all aspects of the study permit process will result in faster processing of Indian student applications.

The essential good practices that lead to successful recruitment of Indian students include:

- Marketing in the first instance to the appropriate target audience of students
- Ensuring that the Letter of Acceptance includes all the information contained in the CIC standard Letter of Acceptance

- Thorough counseling of students either directly by the university or by institutional representatives on the ground in India
- Ensuring that the student’s application package, including proof of financial resources, has been rigorously scrutinized for accuracy and comprehensively prepared in accordance with CIC criteria
- Submission of the application directly to the Visa Application Centres
- Liaison and information exchange with the High Commission is helpful especially if recruiting for new programs at institutions.

Continued use of these good practices as well as the increased focus by CIC and DFAIT on the importance of enhancing student recruitment efforts strongly suggest that Canadian universities will soon see even greater numbers of top quality applicants from India attending their institutions.

ANNEX A

AUCC INSTITUTIONS and OTHERS SURVEYED

Five AUCC members took part in the survey. They included:

Simon Fraser University

Dr. Mehran Kiai, Director of Enrollment Services

University of Windsor

Dr. Bruce Tucker, Associate Vice President Academic Affairs and **Dr. Clayton Smith**, Vice-Provost Students and Registrar

McGill University

Ms. Kim Bartlett, Director Admissions and Recruitment, Enrollment Services

Saint Mary's University

Ms. Kristen Sutherland, International Recruitment Specialist

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Ms. Shona Perry-Maidment, Director Office of Student Recruitment

Others who contributed to the research through meetings, telephone or email interviews included:

Mr. Jorge Acetunyo, Deputy Director, Temporary Resident Policy and Program Development Division, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Mr. David Manicom, Minister-Counsellor, Immigration Program Manager, Canadian High Commission, New Delhi, India

Ms. Maria Mathai, former Country Director, Canadian Education Centre Network, New Delhi India

Mr. Dani Zaretsky, Chief Ideas Officer and **Mr. Mel Broitman**, Chief Overseas Office, Higher-Edge

Mr. Gardiner Wilson formerly Director of Public Policy and Research at the CEC Network led the research. His earlier career with DFAIT as a senior Canadian diplomat which included an overseas assignment with CIC also provided helpful insight.

ANNEX B

VISA APPLICATION CENTRES (VACs) General Information from CIC

What is a VAC?

VACs are service provider organizations that offer applicants optional assistance in the completion of their visa applications to enter Canada. There are currently four VAC service providers operating under agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC): VFS Global, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Philippine Interactive Audiotext Services (PIASI), and Pony Express.

Note: VACs do not provide applicants with immigration counselling, nor do they promote Canada as a destination of choice for any of Canada's migrant streams.

Presently, VACs assist in the processing of temporary resident applications which include the visitor, worker and international student streams. VACs play a key role in responding to various client service issues, including managing high volumes of applications, high rates of improperly completed applications, security of the public and applicants, and facilitating access to CIC services.

Based on experience to date, the use of VACs has been a "win-win" situation for both applicants and CIC. Client service throughout the application process is improved, while mission staff are able to devote resources to the decision-making process.

Fast facts on VACs

- Available in 17 countries, at 31 points of service
- More points of service in closer proximity to applicants, and longer hours of operation
- Handle close to 30 percent of all temporary resident applications submitted abroad (where VACs are available)

- Fewer applications are returned due to incompleteness or incorrect fee payment
- Reduced time and effort required for application processing
- High take-up rate at current VACs allows CIC to focus on high-value-added activities

What services do VACs offer?

VACs offer some or all of the following optional services to applicants for a charge:

- Accept payment of CIC application fees
- Assist applicants in completing application
- Verify completeness of applications before forwarding to visa office
- Store applicant biographical information electronically to facilitate data entry at the visa office
- Schedule interviews
- Provide call centre facilities
- Transfer paper applications, passports and documentation between applicants and visa offices and vice versa
- Offer on-line tracking of application status

The cost of VAC services vary from \$10-\$130 CDN, depending on the type of service and the location of the applicant.

For more information on local VACs, please visit local VAC websites (links found on CIC mission websites).

Visa Application Centre (VAC) Locations:

INDIA:

New Delhi
Jalandhar
Chandigarh
Mumbai
Ahmedabad
Chennai
Hyderabad
Bangalore
Kolkata

NEPAL:

Kathmandu

VIETNAM:

Ho Chi Minh City
Hanoi

ARMENIA:

Yerevan

MOLDOVA:

Chisinau

UGANDA:

Kampala

CHINA:

Beijing
Shanghai
Guangzhou
Chongqing

INDONESIA:

Jakarta

RUSSIA:

Moscow

TAJIKISTAN:

Dushanbe

KENYA:

Nairobi

GUINEA:

Conakry

BANGLADESH:

Dhaka
Chittagong
Sylhet

PHILIPPINES:

Manila

KAZAKHSTAN:

Almaty

KYRGYZSTAN:

Bishkek

TANZANIA:

Dar-es-Salaam

ANNEX C

CIC Data Table

The following data was provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for the purpose of this AUCC research project.

Study Permits Processed in 2008 for all University Level of Study Programs— Cases

Indian Citizenship

Educational Institution	Chandigarh				New Delhi				Chandigarh + Delhi			
	Passed	Failed	Total	Approval Rate -	Passed	Failed	Total	Approval Rate -	Passed	Failed	Total	Approval Rate
All Educational Institution	113	26	139	81%	809	88	897	90%	922	114	1,036	89%
Newfoundland and Labrador					22	5	27	81%	22	5	27	81%
Memorial University of Newfoundland					22	4	26	85%	22	4	26	85%
Other University, Newfoundland						1	1	0%	0	1	1	0%
Prince Edward Island					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
University of Prince Edward Island					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
Nova Scotia	5		5	100%	60	30	90	67%	65	30	95	68%
Dalhousie University	2		2	100%	33	25	58	57%	35	25	60	58%
Mount Saint Vincent University						1	1	0%	0	1	1	0%
Saint Francis Xavier University					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
Saint Mary's University	3		3	100%	22	4	26	85%	25	4	29	86%
University College of Cape Breton					3		3	100%	3	0	3	100%
Other University, Nova Scotia					1	2	3	33%	1	2	3	33%
New Brunswick					19	6	25	76%	19	6	25	76%
Mount Allison University					3		3	100%	3	0	3	100%
University of New Brunswick					16	6	22	73%	16	6	22	73%
Quebec	18	6	24	75%	107	1	108	99%	125	7	132	95%
Concordia University	14	6	20	70%	37	1	38	97%	51	7	58	88%
École Polytechnique					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
Laval University					7		7	100%	7	0	7	100%
McGill University	4		4	100%	51		51	100%	55	0	55	100%
Sherbrooke University					1		1	100%	1	0	1	100%
Université de Montréal					9		9	100%	9	0	9	100%
Other University, Québec					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
Ontario	60	9	69	87%	396	35	431	92%	456	44	500	91%
Algoma University College	1		1	100%		1	1	0%	1	1	2	50%
Brock University	1		1	100%	5	1	6	83%	6	1	7	86%
Carleton University	1		1	100%	12		12	100%	13	0	13	100%
Lakehead University						2	2	0%	0	2	2	0%
Laurentian University of Sudbury					2	2	4	50%	2	2	4	50%
McMaster University					16	1	17	94%	16	1	17	94%
Queen's University	2		2	100%	25		25	100%	27	0	27	100%
Ryerson University	1		1	100%	10	2	12	83%	11	2	13	85%
Trent University	1		1	100%	2	1	3	67%	3	1	4	75%
University College, Toronto					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
University of Guelph	2		2	100%	10		10	100%	12	0	12	100%
University of Ottawa					4	2	6	67%	4	2	6	67%
University of Toronto	3		3	100%	77	2	79	97%	80	2	82	98%
University of Waterloo	1		1	100%	28		28	100%	29	0	29	100%
University of Western Ontario	2		2	100%	28	1	29	97%	30	1	31	97%
University of Windsor	42	7	49	86%	130	18	148	88%	172	25	197	87%
Wilfrid Laurier University					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
York University	3	2	5	60%	43	2	45	96%	46	4	50	92%
Other University, Ontario	1		1	100%	1	1	2	50%	2	1	3	67%
Manitoba	7	8	15	47%	31	3	34	91%	38	11	49	78%
University of Manitoba	5	6	11	45%	27	1	28	96%	32	7	39	82%
University of Winnipeg	2	2	4	50%	4	2	6	67%	6	4	10	60%
Saskatchewan	5		5	100%	30	1	31	97%	35	1	36	97%
University of Regina	1		1	100%	8		8	100%	9	0	9	100%
University of Saskatchewan	4		4	100%	22	1	23	96%	26	1	27	96%
Alberta	8	1	9	89%	71	3	74	96%	79	4	83	95%
University of Alberta	7	1	8	88%	39	2	41	95%	46	3	49	94%
University of Calgary	1		1	100%	30	1	31	97%	31	1	32	97%
University of Lethbridge					2		2	100%	2	0	2	100%
Other University, Alberta		1	1						0	1	1	0%
British Columbia	10	2	12	83%	71	4	75	95%	81	6	87	93%
Simon Fraser University	6	1	7	86%	17	2	19	89%	23	3	26	88%
Trinity Western University		1	1			2	2	0%	0	3	3	0%
University of British Columbia	3		3	100%	44		44	100%	47	0	47	100%
University of Victoria	1		1	100%	10		10	100%	11	0	11	100%
Other University, British Columbia	13	16	29	45%	12	7	19	63%	25	23	48	52%