A TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS

Unlocking International Talent and Pathways to Engage with SAIT International Students and Alumni
International talent plays a crucial role in mitigating skilled labour shortages and addressing the demographic challenges stemming from an aging workforce and declining birth rates. The contributions of attracting and retaining this diverse talent pool transcend far beyond organizational boundaries, offering significant economic and social benefits for our communities, and provincial and national economies. The Government of Canada’s International Education Strategy is a robust policy in which international education plays an essential role to ensure that Canada’s labour force has the needed skills and talent it needs to compete in a global economy.1

Employers who are future-focused and intentional about the evolving needs of our economic landscape will have a major advantage and be key players in our future prosperity amidst a fiercely competitive and global economy.

Organized in three sections, this toolkit outlines the value international talent brings to the workplace and provides strategies for employers to effectively attract, hire, onboard and integrate international students and alumni into the workplace. It also includes ways employers can engage with SAIT’s international students and alumni.

SAIT is an industry-driven institution that values its relationships with industry. SAIT welcomes additional opportunities to foster collaborative partnerships and work together to engage a pipeline of talent that mutually benefits both employers and SAIT to achieve common goals of success and economic prosperity.

This toolkit was prepared by SAIT’s International Centre and Career Advancement Services and informed by articles, literature reviews, research, and interviews with nine industry leaders. It is a living document that will be updated regularly. We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who took the time to share their insights, experiences and provide feedback.
CONTENTS

WHY INTERNATIONAL TALENT MATTERS .......................................................................................................................... 2
  Higher Profits ........................................................................................................................................................................... 2
  Fuel Innovation and Creativity .................................................................................................................................................... 2
  Attract Top Talent ........................................................................................................................................................................... 3
  Expand Global Connections .......................................................................................................................................................... 3
  Increase Engagement, Productivity and Retention ..................................................................................................................... 3

OPPORTUNITIES NOT BARRIERS ............................................................................................................................................. 4
  Recruitment ..................................................................................................................................................................................... 5
    Work Integrated Learning Opportunities .................................................................................................................................... 6
  Hiring ........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 7
  Onboarding .................................................................................................................................................................................... 10
  Integration ................................................................................................................................................................................................ 12
    Building International Students’ and Graduates’ Professional Confidence .............................................................................. 12
    Building Cross-Cultural Understanding .................................................................................................................................. 13

ENGAGING WITH SAIT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND ALUMNI .................................................................................. 14
  Industry Mentorship Program .......................................................................................................................................................... 14
  Ten Thousand Coffees ...................................................................................................................................................................... 14
  Industry Mentorship Circles ............................................................................................................................................................ 15
  My Career Hub ................................................................................................................................................................................... 15
  Employer Sessions ............................................................................................................................................................................... 15
  Work-Integrated Learning ............................................................................................................................................................. 15

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 16

Oki, ᐄba wathtech, Danit’ada, Tawnshi, Hello. SAIT is located on the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of Treaty 7 which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut’ina and the ïyârhe Nakoda of Bearspaw, Chiniki and Goodstoney. We are situated in an area the Blackfoot tribes traditionally called Moh’kinsstis, where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. We now call it the City of Calgary, which is also home to the Métis Nation, Region 3.
Robert Half’s *Employment Trends in 2023: Demand for Skilled Talent* study shows that 90% of hiring managers struggle to attract new talent. International students and alumni are a vastly talented demographic that can alleviate some of the pressing challenges of skilled labor shortages experienced across industries, presenting additional opportunities for companies looking to thrive and embrace the evolving nature of work.

**HIGHER PROFITS**

International students and graduates are comprised of individuals from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, adding unique perspectives, cultural competence and global skills that enrich the diversity and performance of a team.

Companies with a more diverse workforce have higher economic outcomes compared to their less diverse industry counterparts. This relationship has been found to be consistent across time and geographical boundaries. Every 1% increase in ethnocultural diversity leads to a 2.4% increase in revenue and 0.5% increase in workplace productivity.

**FUEL INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY**

International students and graduates bring a wealth of diverse knowledge, unique experiences and fresh perspectives, which fuel innovation, creativity and enhancement of a team’s problem-solving and decision-making capability. Many also have global work experience, additional knowledge and skills from their previous education that can help employers gain a competitive advantage.

They are resilient, can embrace change, and adapt to challenges and shifts in the market with agility developed through their bold international journeys of furthering their education while adapting to a different language and cultural environment in a new country.

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*Bringing in international talent has been a good way to challenge us as employers with new ideas, a useful exchange of theoretical and practical information, and a different perspective on the current business issues facing us.*

Chief Human Resource Officer, Nonprofit Sector
ATTRACTION TOP TALENT

Diverse and inclusive companies gain a significant advantage in attracting top talent from diverse and domestic talent pools.8

According to Glassdoor’s 2020 Diversity Hiring Survey, 76% of job seekers stated that diversity is important to them when evaluating companies and job offers, and 32% stated that they would not apply to a company that is not diverse.9

Businesses prioritizing diversity are not only better equipped to navigate change but also establish reputations as socially responsible and desirable organizations.10

EXPAND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

International talent offers an advantage for organizations seeking to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and global economy. Their global skills, expansive networks, cultural intelligence and multiple languages can lead to an expanded customer base, new business development opportunities, and future global connections and collaborations.12 Their global mindset, cultural fluency, understanding of new markets and language drives innovation and can build bridges beyond North America.13

INCREASE ENGAGEMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND RETENTION

International students and graduates have a strong work ethic and were described by employers as some of the hardest working, industrious, dedicated and service-oriented staff they have ever had. They have a high drive to succeed and get connected to the Canadian job market to prove their capabilities as they work towards Canadian permanent residency.

With 9/10 SAIT students expressing and interest to stay and settle in Canada, this is higher than the national average.15 According to a 2021 survey conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education, 72.6% of international students expressed they plan to stay and settle in Canada after their studies, 19.9% stated uncertainty about their future plans, and only 7.4% said they had no plans to stay.16
OPPORTUNITIES NOT BARRIERS

This section outlines common obstacles and perceived risks faced by employers when considering international students and graduates as valuable additions to their teams.

Proactively recognizing and addressing common barriers can unlock the potential within our diverse international talent pool, enhancing organizational agility, attraction and retention to drive innovation and success.

The tools and resources suggested can help create an environment where international candidates thrive and contribute their diverse skills and perspectives, ultimately enriching the overall success of the organization.

“When you create an inclusive atmosphere where employees can come out of their shells and feel a sense of belonging... magic happens.”

CEO, Tech Sector
RECRUITMENT

When it comes to recruitment and selection, considerations and resources around interview questions, processes and practices, and work-integrated learning opportunities for international students and graduates could help mitigate potential gaps or perceived barriers. Cultivating a diverse workforce is also an opportunity to acknowledge potential inequities in the workplace and how employers can actively contribute to positive change.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE CANDIDATES

Simplify language

Strive for simplicity and clear and straightforward language in your interview approach by avoiding acronyms, figures of speech, slang, jokes, abbreviations and idioms that may not easily translate across cultures. While many of us use humor and small talk to make candidates more comfortable during the interview, if international candidates do not understand your jokes or appear to struggle with small talk, recognize that it is likely a sign of cultural differences and does not reflect their communication skills.

Want to learn more?

Culturally-Competent Communication for Interviews (CPHR-BC)
Interviewing Immigrant Candidates

Accents and informal communication proficiency

Accents and informal communication proficiency can impact the initial interview phase. Someone with a foreign accent to Canada should not be equated with a lower capability, intelligence or ability to connect with colleagues. Existing societal norms may sometimes breed these misconceptions. Determine if strong communication skills are vital for safety-critical roles or communication-focused positions, or simply a preference. When assessing candidates, it’s important to reflect on whether their accent truly reflects language proficiency.

Consider implementing language equity practices such as competency-based testing that can assess a candidates’ communication abilities objectively, based on job requirements and qualifications for the role, allowing them to demonstrate skills through practical tasks or simulations rather than by describing them.

Want to learn more?

Culturally-Competent Awareness of Body Language at Interviews (CPHR-BC)
Testing Performance and Skills on Key Job Criteria – Interview Stage
Competency-Based Interviews
Virtual Interviews (WES)
**Revisit and reframe interview questions**

Consider taking a fresh look at your interview questions through a lens of cultural sensitivity. An employer shared that certain behavioral-based interview questions may not resonate well with individuals from diverse cultures, potentially hindering effective information gathering. For instance, a question like “Tell us about a time when you doubted your abilities” may be challenging for candidates from cultures that discourage vulnerability or view it as unacceptable. Appreciating the potential difficulties associated with such questions ensures a more inclusive and meaningful interview experience.

**Want to learn more?**

- **Rephrasing Interview Questions – For HR Professionals and Employers**
- **Job Advertisements and Applications. Alberta Human Rights Commission**
- **Interviewing and making hiring decisions Ontario Human Rights Commission**
- **Canadian human rights commission – Your Guide to Understanding the Canadian Human Rights Act**
- **National Playbook – World Education Services (WES)**

**Revisit Canadian Experience Requirements**

Question whether Canadian experience is actually integral to the skills and performance needed in the role. If not, remove it. Basing hiring and accreditation decisions solely on Canadian experience as a measure of skills and abilities does not determine one’s competency or potential for success. Of unemployed recent immigrants, 40% highlighted the lack of Canadian work experience as a significant obstacle.

**Want to learn more?**

- **Rethinking Assumptions: Unpacking Canadian Work Experience Employer Resource Toolkit**
- **Removing the “Canadian experience” barrier – A guide for employers and regulatory bodies** offers a useful guide and good example for the rest of the Canadian provinces.
- **Creating an Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment: A Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention**

**WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

**Provide Work-Integrated Learning Opportunities**

Take advantage of opportunities for applicants to demonstrate their qualifications through internships, practicums, co-ops, short-term contracts or positions that include probationary periods.

**Want to learn more?**

Did you know that you can hire a practicum/co-op student or that your organization can submit a project for one of our many capstone courses? To find out more about SAIT’s work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities and how you can connect with our students in the classroom, contact our work-integrated learning liaison at wil@sait.ca.
HIRING

Immigration Regulations Simplified: Hiring International Students and Graduates

When it comes to recruiting international students and graduates, one of the most common barriers is a perception that immigration regulations make the hiring process complicated. This may deter employers from hiring international talent seeking work-integrated learning opportunities and skilled employment. The Government of Canada’s revised process has made hiring international students and graduates simple for employers and requires no commitment, sponsorship, Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA), or laborious bureaucratic processes on the part of the employer.

This section includes frequently asked questions and a resource guide to simplify the regulatory landscape. For the most up to date information, please refer to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website: canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/hire-temporary-foreign/international-students.html

Immigration Regulations23: Frequently Asked Questions

HIRING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
WHILE THEY STUDY

I’m interested in hiring an international student but they don’t have a work permit. Am I allowed to employ them?

Yes! International students with valid study permits may be eligible to work without a separate work permit. If eligible, the authorization to work will be printed directly on their study permit.

As an employer, how can I make sure they’re eligible to work?

You can ask to see a copy of their study permit to make sure their document hasn’t expired and for an enrolment letter to make sure they’re studying full-time in a credential leading program that’s at least 6 months long.

Are international students restricted to a certain number of work hours?

International students can work off-campus:

- Part-time during academic sessions
- Up to full-time during scheduled breaks (e.g. summer break, winter holidays and reading week). During these breaks, they can work overtime or work two part-time jobs that add up to a higher than usual number of hours.

It is the student’s responsibility to know when their scheduled breaks are.

International students may be eligible to work more than 20 hours per week during academic sessions under a temporary public policy.24
My employee’s study permit is expiring soon, and they haven’t received a new one yet, does that mean they have to stop working?

Not necessarily. They can maintain their student status and can continue working if they applied for an extension before their initial study permit’s expiration date as long as they stay inside Canada while they wait for their extension.

How can I verify they’ve maintained their status?

You can ask to see the receipt of extension to ensure it was received by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) before midnight on the expiration date.

HIRING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ON CO-OP/INTERNSHIP

We run co-op/internship/practicum programs; can international students apply?

They can! SAIT is a leader in applied education and if it’s part of their program, the international student will already have a co-op work permit. These opportunities are valuable to international students and positively correlate with better economic outcomes after graduation.

We have amazing international student talent. If you’re interested in hiring a co-op, internship or practicum student, you can reach out to wil@sait.ca.

HIRING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AFTER THEY GRADUATE

Can international students legally work if they’ve graduated?

They can! They’re able to work full-time if they meet all these requirements:

1. They were already able to work off campus during their studies.
2. They applied for a post-graduation work permit (PGWP) before their study permit expired, and they were inside Canada on the day they submitted their application.
3. They’re waiting for a decision on their post-graduation work permit application.

So, technically they could seamlessly go from student to worker?

Exactly. Here’s more info on post-graduation work permits:

• It’s up to the graduate to apply for the permit, and the employer bears no costs.
• It can last up to three years, has no hourly restrictions and no restrictions on the type of work.
• It lets international graduates work for any eligible Canadian employer.
• There’s no need for a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA).

What documents can I ask for to make sure they’re allowed to work while they wait for their post-graduation work permit?

You can request to see all of the following:

1. Their letter of completion from SAIT.
2. A copy of their valid study permit.
3. A copy of the acknowledgement of receipt from their PGWP application.
# Employer Guide: Hiring International Students While They Study or After They Graduate

Last updated June 27, 2023

## TYPE OF WORK | REQUIRED PERMIT | ABOUT THE PERMIT | NOTES
--- | --- | --- | ---
**On-campus work** | Their existing Study Permit  
• If eligible to work during their studies, it will be listed in the conditions on their study permit. ([R186(f)](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/student-worker/student-permits.html)) | Hourly restrictions  
• Full-time during scheduled breaks. | Students may work on-campus in addition to off-campus, provided they continue meeting the applicable eligibility requirements.  

**Off-campus work** | Their existing Study Permit  
• If eligible to work during their studies, it will be listed in the conditions on their study permit. ([R186(f)](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/student-worker/student-permits.html)) | Hourly restrictions  
• Up to 20 hours a week during academic terms or more if eligible.  
• Full-time during scheduled breaks. | Students may work under the same conditions of their study permit until the day they receive their letter of completion from SAIT.  

**Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) – co-op, internship, practicum** | Co-op Work Permit  
Subparagraph 205(c)(i), (i.1) and (i.2) |  
- This permit is co-op specific.  
- Permit will have SAIT listed as the employer. |  
- Students may work before and/or after their WIL component.  
- During their WIL component, they may take up additional on- or off-campus work. ([R186(v)](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/student-worker/student-permits.html))  

**Working after graduation** | Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP)  
Subparagraph 205(c)(iii) | Hourly restrictions  
- Full-time and/or part-time  
- They may also be self-employed.  
- Valid for up to 3 years, depending on the duration of the student’s study program. | Graduates may work while they wait for a decision on their PGWP application, provided they meet the criteria. ([R186(w)](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/student-worker/student-permits.html))
ONBOARDING

A clear and intentional onboarding process will help new international students and graduates feel welcomed, develop a sense of belonging and learn workplace norms and culture. Investing in a successful onboarding experience leads to higher employee satisfaction, increased productivity and improves new hire retention by as much as 80%.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Understand workplace culture hierarchy or power differences

Understand that international talent may be coming from hierarchal systems where admiration to those in senior roles is expected. They may demonstrate heightened hierarchal awareness and sensitivity (e.g., standing up from their desk when a manager or senior level team member walks in, referring to senior leaders as Sir or Madam or Mr./Ms., waiting for managers to go home before they leave after regular office hours). They may also feel that they are not being productive if they are chatting with colleagues instead of doing work, not understanding that informal conversations with colleagues are also part of the job and an important part of forming relationships.

Want to learn more?

Common Cultural Differences that Cause Misunderstandings in the Workplace  pg. 17 (2020).
From Employer Toolkit: Attracting and Integrating Internationally Trained Employees (ITEs) in South Okanagan-Similkameen.

Create a comprehensive onboarding program

A comprehensive onboarding program will help make new employees feel welcome and provide clear communication around expectations and nuances of the workplace such as unwritten Canadian and work protocols, work ethics, cultural norms and informal practices (such as ways to address colleagues and senior leaders, value of collaboration and expressing ideas in meetings).

Review onboarding material with the new hire to introduce important policies and operating instructions, company communication styles and information around soft skills outlook and meeting etiquette, response time and common practices around use of cameras in meetings. Provide clear instructions, both verbal and electronic communication for ease of reference, what to expect on the first day/week, make appointments for them to meet key staff, and create a checklist of what would be helpful.

Want to learn more?

On-boarding Template
Buddy program or ambassador position

Create a supportive community and pair international graduates up with someone in the organization that they can go to for questions and who can show them around. Employers suggested that pairing them up with someone who shares a similar background or experience could be helpful. Connecting them with someone with a different background could also be valuable and help advance cross-cultural learning and connection. An HR senior manager of People Analytics and Workforce Planning in the investment sector stated, “They start to thrive when they feel more comfortable”.

An ambassador position can be built into someone’s performance management for limited terms. It can be optional, flexible and fun for employees. If it’s not possible to create an ambassador role at a company, it can be made part of someone’s position (e.g., marketing) as part of promoting the company and creating a fun atmosphere.

Crowdsource community supports and resources as a team

Consider collecting and sharing resources available in the local community as a team. International talent or employees who are new to the city may not have the same quality of networks that domestic talent may have and are not immune to feelings of loneliness or isolation. Asking about things they love to do and sharing activities available in the community may help address loneliness and cultivate belonging. An employer shared that their 23-year-old company, which started with 20 employees and is now over 700, has found great success in building this practice into their company culture.

Check your company’s benefits

Benefit providers may offer different benefits to their Canadian and permanent resident employees compared to those with open permits. Look into this and consider alternate benefit providers, and if that’s not possible, communicate this information with the international graduate so there are no surprises.
INTEGRATION

Both employers and international talent may encounter initial challenges arising from cross-cultural differences. By actively seeking to bridge cultural differences, organizations can foster an inclusive culture that benefits everyone, enhancing cultural understanding and satisfaction and promoting collaboration, communication, creativity, productivity and sense of belonging in the workplace. Each company’s journey is unique, allowing them to identify initiatives that align with their specific needs and goals.

BUILDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ AND GRADUATES’ PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENCE

Empower through open communication, coaching and mentorship opportunities

Communication is key. Employers interviewed mentioned that they noticed that initially some international students and graduates may feel uncomfortable speaking up, asking for help or making a mistake. Provide a supportive environment and create a culture where they feel it is okay to ask for help and be vulnerable and honest.

Provide mentorship within the organization. For example, pair them up with someone in a managerial position, so they can practice talking to someone in a higher position of power (e.g., meet every two weeks — one different person per month).

Learn management style preferences

Learn about how your new international hire likes to be managed and communicated with. International hires may experience confusion or misrepresentation regarding the style of communication managers use to provide feedback. They may be accustomed to more direct and straightforward feedback, whereas North American culture often favors a polite and diluted approach.

They may also have stricter adherence to getting things approved, for example, asking for approval of their decision making. Make those expectations clear. With time, they will feel more comfortable, empowered, and start to thrive in the organization.

Career advancement opportunities

Address barriers to career advancement — it is a strong retention tool. The initial impression of lack of confidence among international employees may hinder their prospects for future advancement or promotion within a company. International candidates can be viewed as entry-level and overlooked for advancement, do not underestimate the value they bring and invest in people in your organization, offer development opportunities, and career progression, a big part of engagement and retention.
BUILDING CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Intercultural training

Intercultural training is highly recommended for all employees to develop cross-cultural competency skills, essential in fostering interconnections among colleagues with diverse backgrounds.27

Want to learn more?

Check out SAIT’s Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Starter Pack, and contact corporate.training@sait.ca to learn more.

Building inclusive workplaces and a learning organization

The best way to learn about the cultural composition of your team is to ask. Employers are increasingly recognizing the importance of understanding and learning more about the cultural, religious practices and needs of their employees. This can be done during the onboarding process for new employees, through surveys, one-on-one meetings, or through committees or groups your organization may have.28 Taking proactive steps to learn about, accommodate, and celebrate diverse cultural practices creates an environment where employees feel valued, respected, and included.

You could celebrate the diversity in your workforce in posters, newsletters and other communications as well as by hosting cultural and social events such as potlucks and cultural awareness days. You could welcome employees to engage in intercultural exchanges if they are comfortable, such as lunch and learns to share their traditions and holidays.

It is important to note that it is unfair to expect marginalized colleagues to solely educate others on diversity, equity and inclusion. Active engagement at the organizational and leadership level is the most effective approach in learning and practicing this work rather than placing the responsibility on marginalized colleagues to teach or do the work on behalf of others.

Want to learn more?


GEDI-Hub’s EDI Resources (Creating Inclusive Workplaces: Holidays & Events Handbook – February 23, 2023 Update date)

Days of Significance: A Guide 2023-2024 (Tamarack Institute)

Strategies for Immigrant Inclusion in the Canadian Workplaces

Creative Equity Toolkit
ENGAGING WITH SAIT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

SAIT STUDENTS ARE INDUSTRY-READY

SAIT students learn from instructors who come directly from the industries they teach. Curriculum is shaped by instructors’ expertise and input from industry partners and a hands-on learning approach that is designed to replicate the expertise of real workplaces.

SAIT graduates are driving innovation, building communities and leading business worldwide. Offering 100+ degree, diploma and certificate programs across a wide range of areas like business, transportation, engineering, digital technology, health and public safety and more, SAIT equips students with the skills they need for successful careers. Career Advancement Services offer a range of services in order to connect industry partners with skilled SAIT students and alumni looking to gain valuable industry connections and work opportunities. We offer opportunities to connect directly with current SAIT students and alumni through industry mentorship and networking.

Industry Mentorship Program

Transform the future by using your professional expertise to help shape a student’s career path within your industry. Become a mentor and enhance your leadership skills and personal growth with SAIT’s Industry Mentorship Program. This 12-week program is aimed at providing students with the opportunity to develop their communication skills, build their professional network, enhance their understanding of the workplace and explore potential career paths.

Frequently Asked Questions

Ten Thousand Coffees

With the shift to remote work, it can feel almost impossible to connect directly with students and alumni — that’s where Ten Thousand Coffees (10KC) comes in. 10KC is a platform that allows students, alumni, and employers to connect and build meaningful relationships through virtual informal coffee chats to keep the conversation and collaboration flowing.
Industry mentorship circles

Host a virtual or in-person industry mentorship circle, where we invite experienced professionals to lead an open discussion about career preparation with SAIT students and alumni. Topics may include smart networking strategies, tips for navigating the workplace, career search techniques and more. As the mentor you get to decide on the topic; however, we’re always happy to offer suggestions.

Interested in participating in industry mentorship at SAIT? Please complete this form to discover which opportunity best suits you. Once you’ve completed the form, you will be contacted with next steps.

Employer sessions

Employer sessions are a great way to promote your organization and news about upcoming job opportunities with students and recent graduates from targeted SAIT programs. Target your session to a specific school or program, and customize your event for networking or recruitment.

To submit a request for a virtual employer session, please complete our online request form. Contact us for more information on industry nights, presentations for our student clubs and on-campus interview sessions.

My Career Hub

My Career Hub allows employers to advertise job opportunities to SAIT students and alumni for free. With over 30,000 registered users, it serves as an online portal to all things career advancement at SAIT. The site also contains a resource library with important links and resources about things like federal grants for hiring summer students, employer rights and responsibilities, and tips for writing an effective job ad.

Join My Career Hub to post job opportunities and register for on-campus recruitment events, such as Career Fair.

Work-integrated learning

Career Advancement Services is committed to connecting SAIT students and alumni with employers who value a diverse and inclusive workforce. Our team works closely with SAIT services that support students from equity-seeking groups to ensure they have access to job search support.
REFERENCES


7. Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (2014). *Locking in your leadership: Toolkit for developing a diversity and inclusion strategy*.


11. SAIT Entrance Survey Academic Year 2021-2022. Credit Enrolment: Highest Level of Education Before Starting Program at SAIT.


14. 2022 Graduate Employment Survey conducted by SAIT’s Business Intelligence and Analytics Unit.

15. 2022 Graduate Employment Survey conducted by SAIT’s Business Intelligence and Analytics Unit.


23. For updated information on Hiring international students, refer to: *Hire international students* on the Government of Canada, Immigration and Citizenship website.

24. You can find more information on the temporary public policy under *How many hours you can work off campus*.

25. For more information, visit Government of Canada website – *Temporary Residents: Students*.


