

Key Findings

Global Citizenship in a Canadian Context

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Industry, government, and universities in Canada frequently identify global citizenship as an important outcome of education; however, there is significant debate about the meaning of this term. The goals of this Knowledge Synthesis report are to: explain the roots of this debate, identify some of the key terms frequently used by universities as proxies for global citizenship, uncover discrepancies among universities in their understanding and approach to global citizenship, propose a unifying framework for global citizenship, and offer some methods through which institutions can evaluate their efforts. A shared understanding of how our education system discusses global citizenship is necessary to help better shape the experiences students have, to ensure the evaluation of university programs is possible and effective, and to create alliances among industry, government, and universities to enhance their development of individuals as global citizens.

Key findings from our analysis:

- An analysis of the literature is consistent with our perception of an increasing use of global citizenship terminology by universities over the past decade.
- In the provincial educational system (K-12), the curricular focus is on the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a global community and encouraging active participation; however, there is no consistent curricular policy on when and where students engage with this concept.
- Most Canadian universities have incorporated global citizenship into their strategic, academic or integrated plans
- Canadian universities often use a variety of other words as proxies for the broader term, global citizenship.
- There is no consistent definition of what characterizes a global citizen among Canadian universities.
- Universities describe global citizenship as:
 - A mechanism to raise the institutional reputation and status
 - Enacted only at the individual unit level
 - A component of a liberal education
 - No different from internationalization
 - An integral part of the curriculum for all students; these universities can serve as models for post-secondary institutions across Canada
- We propose a new framework for understanding global citizenship which encourages universities to consider the complex and interconnected attributes of a global citizen as well as the process through which students will become global citizens.
- We identify mechanisms through which universities can encourage students to become global citizens.

Executive Summary

Global Citizenship in a Canadian Context

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Industry, government, and universities in Canada frequently identify global citizenship as an important outcome of education; however, there is significant debate about the meaning of this term. The goals of this Knowledge Synthesis report are to: explain the roots of this debate, identify some of the key terms frequently used by universities as proxies for global citizenship, uncover discrepancies among universities in their understanding and approach to global citizenship, propose a unifying framework for global citizenship, and offer some methods through which institutions can evaluate their efforts. A shared understanding of how our education system discusses global citizenship is necessary to help better shape the experiences students have, to ensure the evaluation of university programs is possible and effective, and to create alliances among industry, government, and universities to enhance their development of individuals as global citizens.

This project began with a thorough review of the literature on global citizenship. We used scholarly books to ground our analysis in a theoretical perspective and to help inform our understanding of the different perspectives and approaches that we might uncover. We reviewed the strategic, academic, or integrated plans at 30 different Canadian universities from across the provinces, with institutions that varied in size and academic focus, to determine how post-secondary institutions discuss global citizenship on their campuses. We also examined provincial curriculum documentation to look for alignment with these university plans. Finally, we synthesized existing information, highlighting patterns and consistencies in the academic literature to determine how global citizenship is defined and what mechanisms might be used to encourage students to become global citizens.

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Our New Framework

Without a clear and shared definition, it is impossible for post-secondary institutions to assess whether or not particular efforts actually contribute to the creation of global citizens. Thus, we propose the below framework, which will allow universities to develop a clear and explicitly articulated definition that is grounded in a shared process and vocabulary and is measurable, but which can be adapted to each local institutional reality and the needs of each university.



The above graphic places Global Citizenship at the center of four interconnected quadrants: Culture; Environmental Integrity; Human Rights; and Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities of Individuals (see descriptions for these concepts in the boxes on the following page). To be a global citizen, students must engage with all four of these areas. These quadrants are all informed by the broader social, cultural, political, historical, economic, and scientific context and are not intended to guide specific content; rather, they identify the essential areas of concern for a global citizen in Canada.



Moreover, global citizenship is a process, represented by the outer arrows on the graphic. Students must first gain awareness of a particular issue or concern related to the inner quadrants. As this awareness grows, they may move towards the next stage of the process: the development of the knowledge and skills required to address the issue or concern. As knowledge and skills are gained, students might then take action and may, ultimately, effect change in their local and/or global communities. Each individual will enter the process at a different stage. While this cycle will continue for each student around each aspect of global citizenship, it is necessary to go through each stage of the process prior to moving to the next: awareness is required to develop knowledge and skills; knowledge and skills are required to take action; and action is required to effect change.

Universities must take an active role in encouraging a new generation of Canadians to become global citizens, and most have identified this as a goal for their institutions. However, if this goal is to be achieved, universities must be intentional in their efforts; rather than using proxies for the term and only vaguely identifying the methods by which it could be achieved, institutions must explicitly define what they mean by global citizenship and overtly distinguish the mechanisms they will use to assist students in becoming global citizens. It is our hope this this new framework encourages universities to consider the complex and interconnected areas of concern for a global citizen as well as the process through which students will become global citizens.