

## Australia joins Canada to become first-choice study destination

**Changing perceptions of study destinations show Australia has gained ground, new research demonstrates.**

The *Emerging Futures 4* survey, conducted by global education specialists IDP Education in August 2023, reveals that student perceptions of the individual destination countries are changing and study choice is being impacted.

For the first time in two years, Australia has joined Canada as a first-choice study destination, with a two per cent increase since the previous *Emerging Futures* survey conducted in March 2023, whilst Canada has lost two per cent since the previous survey.

Australia saw increases in perceptions of several important factors, including 'graduate employment opportunities' and 'post-study work policies'. Students continue to choose Australia for its 'high-quality of education' and because it is a 'safe country for international students', with these factors seeing a 3.6 and 3 per cent increase respectively.

The research, which collates the views of more than 10,000 prospective, applied and current international students, shows that Australia remains the top choice for students from Nepal, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Current students studying in Australia reported a satisfaction rate of 7.5 out of 10; higher than the UK and Canada, and just behind the USA with an average of 7.8.

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Simon Emmett, IDP Connect Chief Executive Officer, said changes in perceptions and factors that students consider in their decision making show the top-four destinations should not rely on previous positive sentiment and high rankings.

"Policy changes, dynamic shifts within institutions and global economic conditions all have the power to affect a destination's standings," Mr Emmett said.

Joanna Storti, IDP Connect Director of Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement APAC, said: "Global competition for international students remains high. While Australia is clearly attractive for international students at present, it's imperative that their voices continue to be heard by policy makers and institutions so that Australia remains a leading choice for students."

Cost of living and related issues, such as securing affordable student accommodation, continue to be a concern for international students with more than a third of current international students studying in Australia (35 per cent) saying their rental accommodation close to campus cost more than they had budgeted, while just under a third (32 per cent) said they had rented accommodation further from their campus than desired to access more affordable accommodation.

In a new addition to the survey, IDP asked students about their thoughts on artificial intelligence (AI), relating to their own use of the technology in their international education process and decision making, and how it might be used by institutions.

Students were asked if they had used or intended to use AI, including ChatGPT, to help write university applications. Of the global cohort, 39 per cent said, 'Yes'. Notably, students from China were most inclined to use AI for this purpose, with 73 per cent responding 'Yes'. Globally, 45 per cent of students indicated they would use AI to help them decide which institution to study at, while 47 per cent were open to using it to decide which course to study.

Students also rated 'making the application' and 'shortlisting suitable institutions' as the top two phases at which they would most want human input and advice from a trained counsellor, followed closely by 'confirming my final choice of institution'.



Tennealle O'Shannessy, Chief Executive Officer, IDP said, "With AI becoming more accessible to us in our everyday lives, it is crucial to understand how students are engaging with different types of technology during their international education journey.

"Our research shows that students want human interaction and trusted advice during the process, especially during the application phase. By putting AI technology in the hands of our expert counsellors, IDP is continuing to enhance human connections in a way that meets students' needs. Combining AI with skilled human interaction allows us to provide students with comprehensive information to assist them in making the best possible choices when they need it most."

Less than half of students globally (41 per cent) expected that institutions they are applying to would use AI to assess all or part of their application. While 35 per cent said that the use of AI in determining an applicant's suitability for a course could make the process fairer for all, 31 per cent said it may discriminate against certain students. Overall, the most important factor for students when making an application to an institution was that they receive a decision quickly.

"The use of AI and data science to improve processes in higher education is developing very quickly. It is a very exciting time in the sector, and these advancements will enable the industry to enhance the experience for international students," Ms O'Shannessy added.

For more information about the *Emerging Futures* research, click [here](#).

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### **About IDP Education's *Emerging Futures* research**

IDP's *Emerging Futures* research on the perceptions of more than 10,000 prospective, applied and current international students builds on the findings of the *Crossroads* and *New Horizons* research series, and aims to equip the international education sector, institutions and policy makers with informed insights to offer exceptional global education experiences aligned to student priorities.

### **About IDP Education**

IDP is a leader in international student placement and a proud co-owner of the world's most popular high-stakes English language test (IELTS).

IDP is listed on the Australian securities exchange (ASX:IEL) and has 6,800 employees across more than 30 countries. Its websites attract 100 million visits a year.

We specialise in combining human expertise with digital technology to help people get accepted into their ideal course, take an English language test or learn English in their schools. Our teams work side-by-side with our customers, at every step from course search through to starting their dream course or career.

We partner with more than 890 quality universities and institutions across Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Our data insights are relied upon by organisations around the world to help ensure policies are informed by the diverse needs, challenges and motivations of students.

Most of all, we are proud of our people, who are trusted by our customers to help them realise their global study or career goals.

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