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# Student Outcomes in Public Sector English for Academic Purposes Programs:

## The Value of Your Institution's Language Centre

**Quebec City is on the traditional, unceded territory of the Huron-Wendat people.**

***La ville de Québec est située sur le territoire traditionnel non cédé du peuple Huron-Wendat.***

Le personnel, les activités et le réseau de Langues Canada dépendent des territoires traditionnels autochtones qui nous fournissent un espace physique, des moyens de subsistance, un sentiment de sécurité et de communauté.

*Languages Canada's staff, operations, and network depend on traditional Indigenous territories to provide us physical space, sustenance, safety, and community.*

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# Who We Are

## Valerie Kilgour

Director, Membership and Quality Assurance, Languages Canada

## Jennifer MacDonald

Languages Canada Board Member  
(2022-2023)  
Leadership of Public Sector Language Centre (2012-2023)



Languages Canada is Canada's national language education association. We represent over 170 accredited language programs in public and private institutions across 9 provinces. Our member programs teach Canada's two official languages, English and French, to Canadian and international students.



# Trent University Becomes First in Canada to Offer English as a Second Language Courses for Credit Toward Any Undergrad Degree

June 17, 2021



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International students at Trent can now fast-track their English language studies and degree studies, saving money and time



FR



All news

Celebrating success | International students shine at the Centre for Language Learning



SIGN IN



Faculty of Education



News / Building language skills to rebuild lives

## Building language skills to rebuild lives

Queen's School of English helps to train refugees, asylum seekers, and newcomers through Kingston partnerships



## Faculty of Education



English Language School encourages confidence, builds connections for international learners

**Dal brings new learning to life for young language educators from Colombia**

Mary-Eleanor Power - August 10, 2022



## Manitoba

### University of Winnipeg cancels English Language Program, puts women's soccer team on hiatus

Significant financial challenges cited as reasons for cuts



[Josh Crabb](#) · CBC News ·

Posted: Jan 14, 2025 11:27 PM AST | Last Updated: January 14

## EDUCATION

### Union shocked SFU ending English, interpretation and translation programs



By [Darrian Matassa-Fung](#) · Global News

Posted May 15, 2024 12:31 pm ✓

2 min read

## POLITICS

### Ontario college shuts down decades-old English program, citing enrolment drop-off



By [Isaac Callan](#) & [Colin D'Mello](#)

· Global News

Posted May 8, 2025 5:01 pm ✓

2 min read

## Nova Scotia

### Saint Mary's University to axe English-language training centre

Instructor says Language Centre in Halifax has helped thousands of students, shocked it will close



[Richard Cuthbertson](#) · CBC News ·

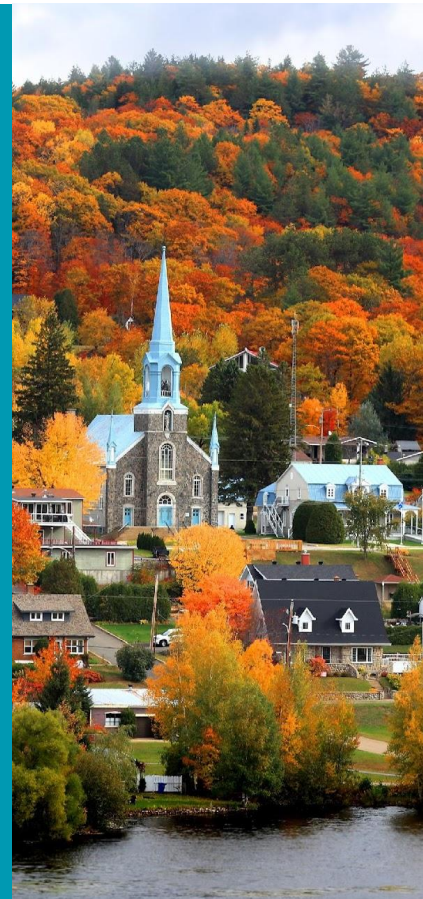
Posted: Jan 24, 2024 4:28 PM AST | Last Updated: January 24, 2024

# Agenda

- About Public College and University Language Centres in Canada
- Study: *Preparing for Success: How Public Sector Language Programs Influence Student Retention and Achievement*
- What Does This Mean for Universities and Colleges? Implications for Practice
  - Leveraging Your Institution's Language Centre
- Q&A and Discussion

# About Public College and University Language Centres in Canada

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# Public College & University Language Centres in Canada

- English or French as an additional language programming
- Diversity across the country: no two centres are alike
  - Academic home: standalone unit, cont ed unit, faculty, student support unit, recruitment, libraries
  - Cost-recovery, revenue-generation are most common funding models
  - Primarily non-credit-bearing programming
- Pre-admission English & French for Academic Purposes pathway programs – one of many types of programs
  - Short-term language courses, youth programming, settlement language support, customized programs, corporate classes
  - Language support for currently enrolled students, faculty and/or staff



# Demonstration of Language Proficiency for Admission

## Direct Entry via Language Proficiency Exam

- IELTS, TOEFL, DET, PTE, Cambridge Advanced, etc.
- Most are “academic”; but limitations on task types, language
- Just tests language, no other skills
- Positive and negative “washback”
- 1-4 hours; \$90-\$350

## Pathway English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program

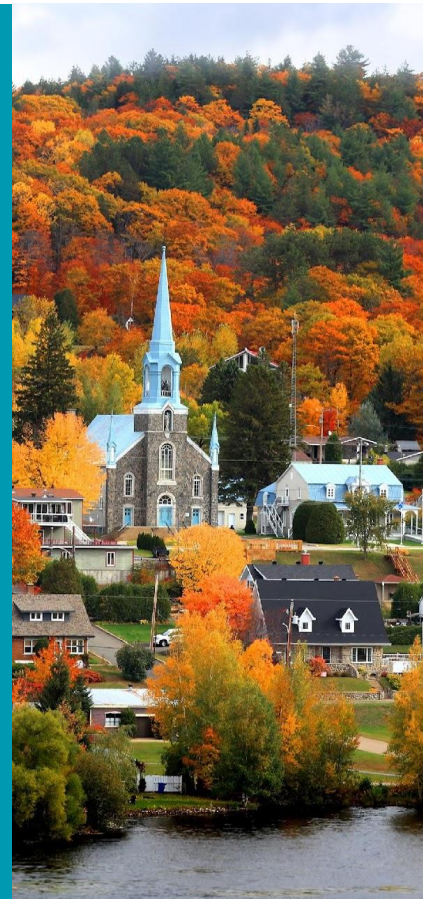
- Academic language skills
- Academic skills
  - academic integrity, assessments, study skills, classroom norms, etc.
- In-house assessment
- 8-12 weeks or 200-300 hours to move from IELTS 6.0-6.5
- Avg. \$5k/semester

# Languages Canada Public Sector Language Programs

- 42 public sector (college & university) members
  - 27 universities; 15 colleges
  - 5 French- and 37 English-language accredited programs
- Support, promotion, and lobbying on behalf of both sectors
- Recent changes in public program membership:
  - 2023 – 5 public programs lost membership
  - 2024 – 1 public program lost membership
  - 2025 – 11 public programs lost membership
  - 2026 – 1 public program foresees closure
- Public Sector Interest Group
  - Standing group of members which meets four times per year, including once in person
  - Chaired by public sector members on LC Board of Directors
  - Responding to the needs and interests of LC's public sector members

# Preparing for Success: How Public Sector Language Programs Influence Student Retention and Achievement

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# Why this research?

- Lack of research of this type; much unpublished
- Some individual institutions have gathered data on pathway outcomes (retention, student success)
- Research needed to quantify the contribution that EAP/FAP programs make to the retention and success of international students
  - Support both internal advocacy within public member institutions and international marketing and recruitment
- 2022 LC Annual Survey: concerning picture for public sector
  - Public sector members - recovered only 40% of pre-pandemic student numbers and student weeks
  - Private sector - recovered 73% of student numbers and 89% of student weeks



# Why now?

- Current research project is the result of a long process...
  - Public Sector Interest Group (PSIG) meeting in Feb. 2023 - need for support for internal advocacy and LC's advocacy efforts with IRCC
  - Agreement reached regarding the need at the national level to quantify the contributions EAP/FAP programs make to the retention and success of international students
  - Research Design Group created and meeting to discuss the project took place in June and September 2023
  - Three research firms responded to RFP; project leads (Julian Inglis and Danielle Freitas) and LC met with the firms to select best fit for the project
  - Academica was selected and kick off meeting took place in Jan 2024

# Research Objective

Understand  
Outcomes of  
EAP/FAP  
Students

To:

- Demonstrate the value of pathway programs to prospective students
- Tell a collective story about the impact of EAP/FAP to the sector and those within our own institutions

# Project Overview

## Three Phases of this Project



**Phase 1:**  
Consultation &  
Research Design



**Phase 2:**  
Research Ethics



**Phase 3:**  
Data Transfer,  
Analysis &  
Reporting

# Research Question

Do the academic outcomes of international students who complete an EAP program differ from those who do not complete an EAP program?



# Method

- Data from 9 institutions: 6 universities and 3 colleges
- 5 academic years: 2018/19 to 2022/23
- 104,724 international students
- Data cleaning resulted in 2,084 cases being removed due to missing values
- 102,640 cases for analysis
  - 89,337 college
    - EAP: 2,424
    - No EAP: 86,913
  - 13,303 university
    - EAP: 2,306
    - No EAP: 10,997

# Variables

**Academic outcome information:** Year 1 GPA, Year 1 credits earned, Year 2 retention status (retained, not retained)

**EAP program information:** program enrolment (enrolled, not enrolled), program length (in number of weeks), program timing (pre-sessional, concurrent)

**Demographic information:** gender, birth year, home country

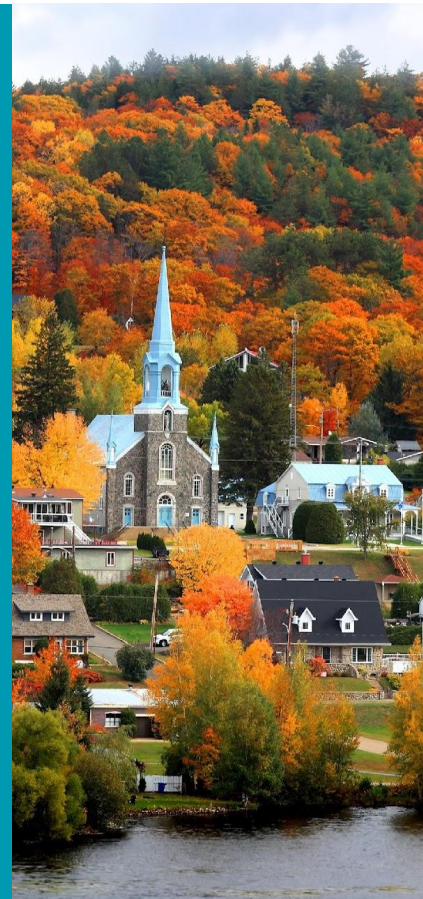
**Academic background information:** cohort year, program of study (CIP code), credential pursued, English proficiency test score, high school grade

# Key Findings

## University and College Student Profiles

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# Demographic Profile of University Students

	# EAP	# No EAP	% EAP
<b>2018/19</b>	505	2,066	20%
<b>2019/20</b>	749	2,423	24%
<b>2020/21</b>	499	2,315	18%
<b>2021/22</b>	375	2,162	15%
<b>2022/23</b>	178	2,031	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,306</b>	<b>10,997</b>	

## Home Country

- EAP Students:  
China (90%), Kuwait (1%),  
Iran (1%), Vietnam (1%),  
Taiwan (1%)
- No EAP: China (31%), India  
(20%), Nigeria (10%),  
Bangladesh (4%),  
Vietnam (3%)



# Demographic Profile of College Students

	# EAP	# No EAP	% EAP
2018/19	923	13,762	6%
2019/20	635	14,166	4%
2020/21	367	9,365	4%
2021/22	247	18,768	1%
2022/23	252	30,852	1%
Total	2,424	86,913	

## Home Country

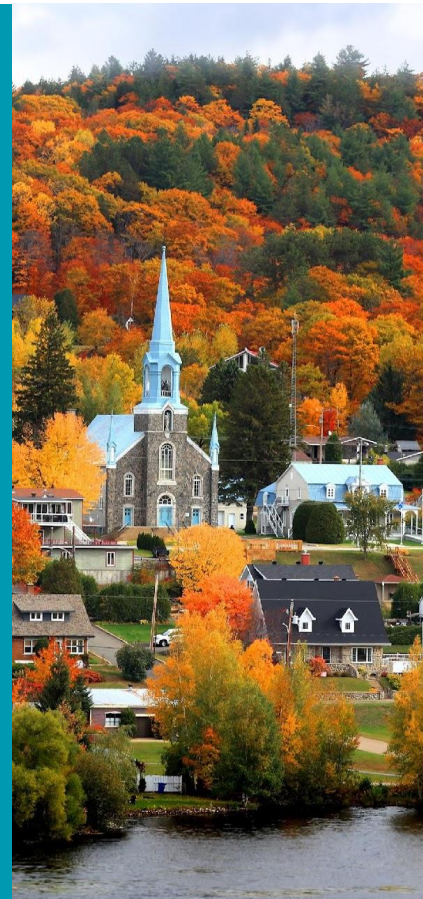
- EAP Students: China (34%), Vietnam (26%), Iran (7%), South Korea (5%), Hong Kong (3%)
- No EAP: India (64%), Philippines (7%), China (4%), Nepal (2%), Nigeria (2%)

# Key Findings

## Academic Outcomes: Colleges

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# Colleges: Retention to Second Year

*Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)*

Colleges

n=88,031

**Overall: 82.6%**

**EAP: 79.6%**

**No EAP: 82.6%**

Colleges – Equivalent IELTS

n=15,141

**Overall: 80.3%**

**EAP: 79.6%**

**No EAP: 80.5%**

*Comparison group restricted to IELTS of:  
6.0 for college diploma and certificate  
6.5 for college post-grad or bachelor*

# Colleges: First Year GPA

*Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)*

Colleges

n=88,031

**Overall: 3.0**

**EAP: 2.8**

**No EAP: 3.0**

Colleges – Equivalent IELTS

n=15,141

**Overall: 2.7**

**EAP: 2.8**

**No EAP: 2.7**

*Comparison group restricted to IELTS of:  
6.0 for college diploma and certificate  
6.5 for college post-grad or bachelor*

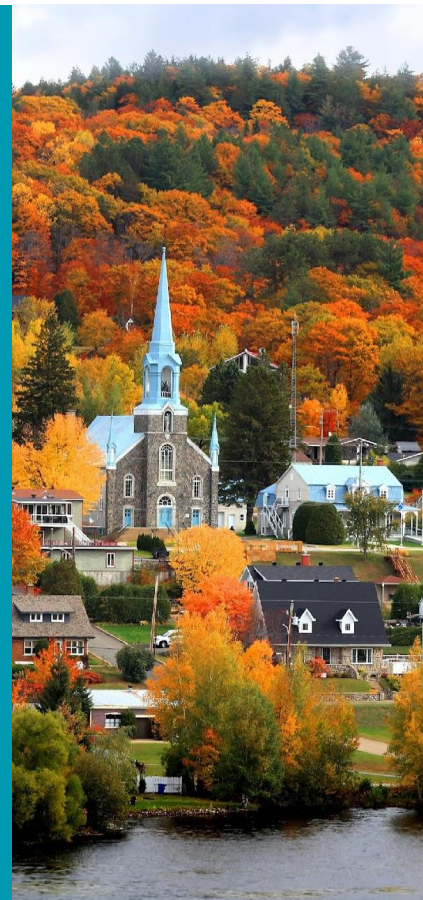


# Key Findings

## Academic Outcomes: Universities

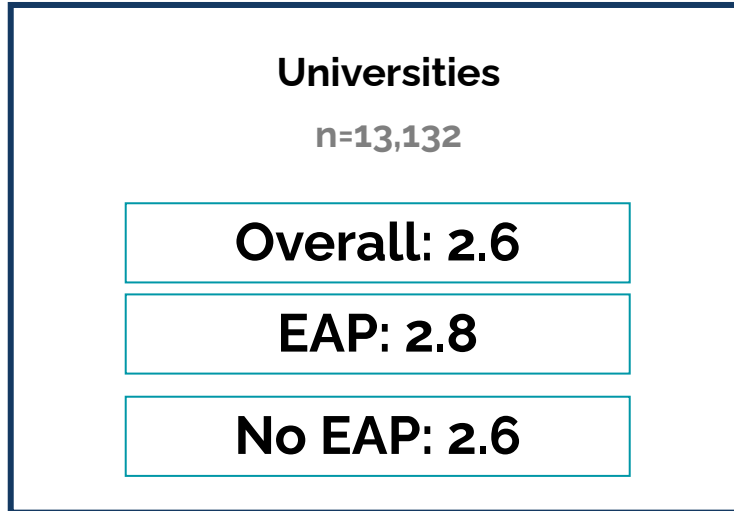
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# Universities: First Year GPA

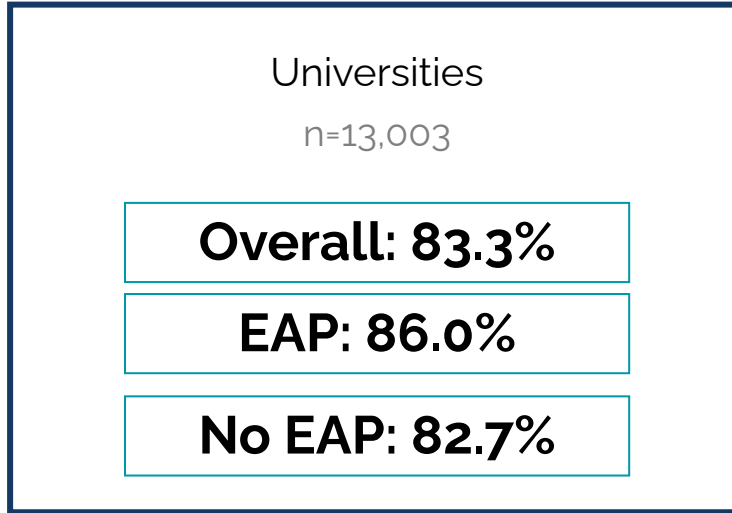
*Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)*



The positive relationship holds when we control for age, gender, program area, academic year, credential, and home country

# Universities: Retention to Second Year

*Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)*



Higher retention among EAP students remains even when we control for age, gender, program area, academic year, credential, and home country

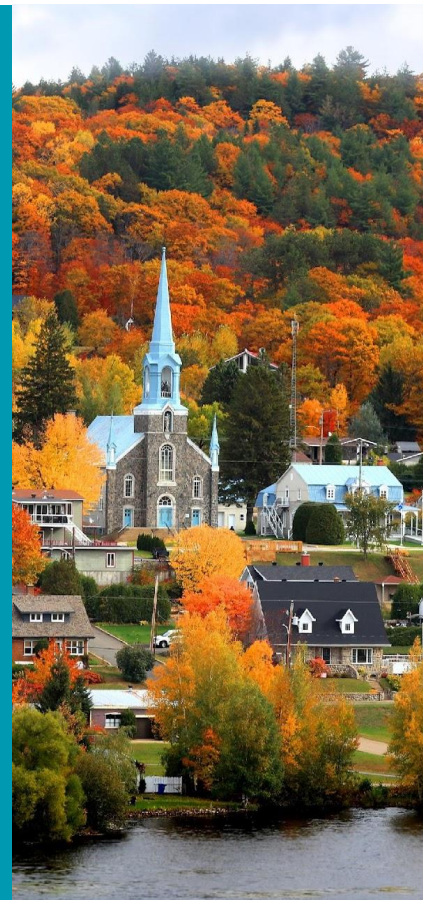
# Summary of Findings

- At the **colleges** studied, EAP program graduates performed as well as or slightly better than international students admitted via direct entry at the IELTS 6.0 threshold in terms of GPA, and retention to second year
- At the **universities** studied, EAP program graduates performed significantly better than the international student population as a whole in terms of GPA and retention to second year

# Impacts and Future Research

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# Impacts of this Study: Advocacy

## Students

EAP program is an investment in their long-term success at the institution

## Institutions

EAP program has real financial impacts due to increased retention

## Language Ed Sector

Clear evidence of positive academic outcomes to tell a collective story

# What's Next for Research

Continuing to explore the data, including:

Deep-dive into college results

Comparison group for university results

Relationship with EAP program factors

Institution-level analysis

# Future Research

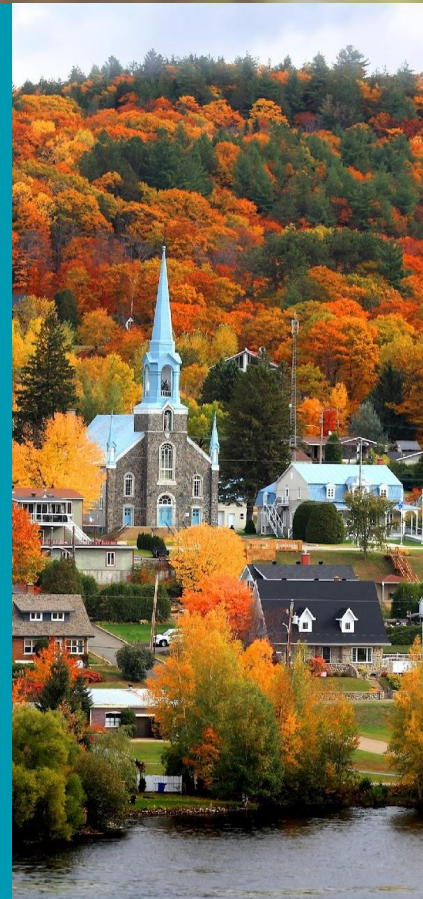
- What makes these programs so successful in improving the academic outcomes of international students?
- Do these programs have similar impacts for all international students or are there differences across subgroups?
- How can the study findings be used to guide quality improvements in EAP programs?
- What can institutions learn from each other?
- Student perspectives: What are the more qualitative outcomes that EAP students experience?

# What Does This Mean for Universities and Colleges?

## Implications for Practice

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**“Access without support is not  
opportunity”**

(Tinto, 2008)

# The Language Centre as Part of the Continuum of Support

- EAP Programs teach “more than language” (Van Viegen and Russell, 2019)
  - Build familiarity with campus services, i.e. accommodations
  - Start to build a network of friends and supports
  - Jump start adaptations to how we teach and learn in Canadian classrooms
  - Learn about academic integrity, codes of conduct, in a safe environment
  - Contribute to a feeling of campus belonging
- Prevents students falling through the cracks or learning lessons “the hard way”

# Value of Language Centres Beyond Student Success

- Recruitment and Admissions
  - EAP Program provides value-add at the Application and Conversion points on the marketing and enrollment funnel
- Financial impact beyond tuition:
  - EAP fees on top of tuition and economic activity
- Institutional innovation and process innovation



# Value of Language Centres Beyond Student Success

- Campus internationalization and diversity
- International Partnerships and agreements
  - Language Centre can identify and nimbly engage with partners, opening the door to institution-wide collaboration
- Community outreach, partnerships, and initiatives

# A Dwindling Pool

- Proud announcements from IRCC on decrease in international students
  - 60% reduction of students with SPs entering country in first half of 2025 compared with 2024
  - 2025 SP target: 437,000
  - Jan-Aug 2025 SP usage: <90,000
- Political tide in Canada turning against immigrants, international students
  - “The consensus on immigration is crumbling”

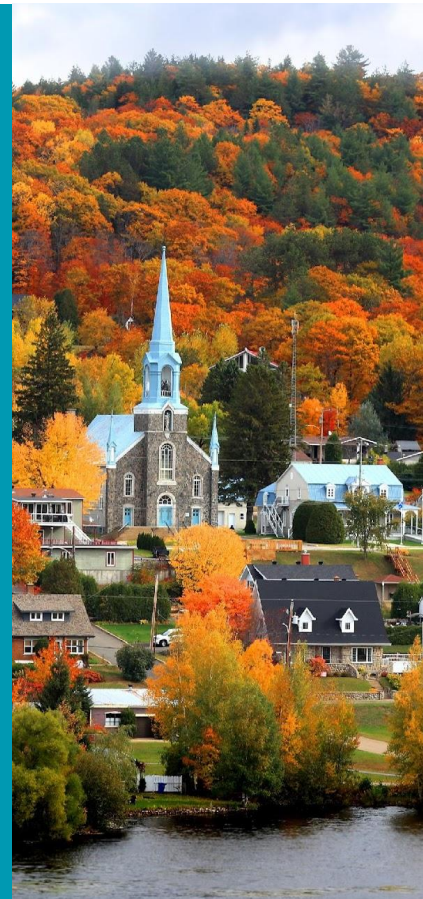


**We have to make the most of the students we have.**

We have to prioritize students who are statistically more likely to be successful, bring in the revenue our institutions need, and support the students in the way they deserve.

# How Can You Better Leverage Your Institution's Language Centre?

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# Questions for reflection

- What factors are most important in these results?
- Do you have any success stories to share about collaboration with your institution's language centre?
- In what aspects of academic and student services support do you think your institution's language centre could play a stronger role?
- Aux collègues des établissements francophones: est-ce que l'on verrait des résultats similaires avec des programmes de français aux fins des études?

# Thank you!

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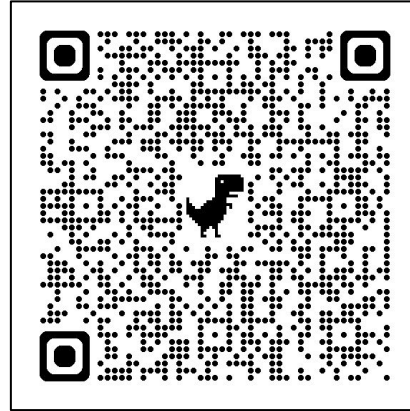


## References



Brief bibliography on the value and impact of English for Academic Purposes programs in Canada

## Full Study



Download full study "Preparing for Success: How Public Sector Language Programs Influence Student Retention and Achievement"



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