

# Report urges more Canadian students to study abroad

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The report's authors call for at least one-quarter of students within the next decade to have an international learning experience.

"You can take bigger risks, or go do something that maybe scares you, because you know you can do it." For Emma Monet, this was the benefit of having an international educational experience. The Ryerson University graduate studied in Turkey for the winter semester of 2016, where she took five courses at [Koç University](#) toward her sociology degree. She said that, in addition to the course credits, she gained problem-solving skills, a wider appreciation for how others live and a greater ability to trust herself.

The authors of a recent report urge more Canadian students to study abroad like Ms. Monet, or else the country risks being left behind, they warn. Other countries, such as the United States, Australia and members of the European Union, are all doing more to expand learning-abroad opportunities for their students, they say.

The report, [Global Education for Canadians: Equipping Young Canadians to Succeed at Home & Abroad](#), was prepared by a group of higher education and private-sector leaders, and is the result of collaboration between the University of Ottawa's Centre for International Policy Studies and the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs. The group presented their findings at a press conference held at U of Ottawa on Nov. 8.

Margaret Biggs, the group's co-chair and the Matthews Fellow on Global Public Policy at Queen's University, laid out the group's goals. Within the next decade, they'd like to see at least a quarter of all Canadian postsecondary education students have a learning-abroad experience. According to a 2016 survey, roughly 11 percent of Canadian undergraduates studied outside the country during their university years. To help make up the difference, the group recommends that a new national initiative, Go Global Canada, be developed to support 15,000 students learning abroad within five years, rising to 30,000 within 10 years.

The report's authors contend, as well, that it's not enough to just increase numbers – more students need to pick new destinations. Traditionally, Canadian students have gravitated toward English-speaking or European countries; a 2016 report indicates that nearly 40 percent of outbound Canadian students chose one of five countries (France topped the list at 13.7 percent, followed by the U.K., U.S., Germany and Australia). The report calls for eventually half of all students going abroad to study in an "emerging nation," citing countries such as China, India, Mexico and Brazil. Such experiences "will put a premium on intercultural skills and on knowledge of other societies," the authors say.

Group co-chair Roland Paris, who holds a University Research Chair in International Security and Governance at U of Ottawa, said the onus is on all stakeholders to make the less-well-known destinations more appealing to Canadian students. "Right now, it's not simply a matter of asking students to consider non-traditional destinations," he said. "It's about creating the support structures and the incentives for them to look at those options seriously." Dr. Paris cited Australia as an example of a country that "properly incentivizes" other destinations through extensive pre-trip preparation, individual support and the use of case workers.

Ms. Monet, for her part, said Ryerson officials offered a great deal of guidance and pre-trip support prior to her studies in Turkey; in fact, the university gave extra guidance in her case, she said, because she was arriving in Istanbul in the wake of a [deadly bombing in January 2016](#).

Ms. Monet said she agrees with the report's authors that global education has to be more accessible. The Ottawa native said she was lucky to benefit from loans, grants, savings and family support. Many students have to work during their undergraduate degrees, she said, and some "can't just take a break from earning money like that."

Zabeen Hirji, chief human resources officer at Royal Bank of Canada and a member of the study group, said learning abroad needs to be within everyone's reach, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they could benefit the most. "When people are empowered, they reframe their own thinking and their own beliefs," she said, "and the possibilities that they think about and dream about, aspire to, actually grow." Ms. Hirji also highlighted the skills students gain from being pushed beyond their comfort zones.

The president of Universities Canada, Paul Davidson, said he was impressed by the report's ambition and believes younger people will come to appreciate the need for different learning experiences. "Over the last decade, much of the signaling has been about, 'Get into university, get out of university, get a job,'" he said. "I think the signaling in recent months, and increasingly, is, 'This world is changing, we're going to need you to be at the top of your game. And to be at the top of your game, you're going to need a different set of skills and experiences than what your parents had.'"