

destination

High schools in British Columbia

Schools in this province make efforts to ensure their international clients integrate and learn many skills.

International students choose to study in high schools in British Columbia largely because of the high level of education they receive, states Tony Carrigan from Richmond School District. "Amongst students in all Canadian provinces, students in British Columbia score the highest on academic measures," he says.

At West Vancouver School District, Rod Matheson also highlights the academic advantages for international students of studying on a high school programme at one of their three secondary schools. "Seventy per cent of our graduates were admitted to the University of British Columbia last September – UBC is the 35th-ranked university in the world," he says.

However, academic success is just one factor taken into consideration by students and their parents and British Columbia has much else to recommend itself. Clemens Rettich from Cowichan Valley School District points out that Canada has a reputation for safety and acceptance as well as physical beauty. "Students choose to study on Vancouver Island, particularly Cowichan Valley, because we have the best weather in Canada, very high academic and athletic standards and the perfect balance of a peaceful rural lifestyle in close proximity to exciting multicultural cities," he says.

A high school student's experience of the wider surroundings of their study destination is largely reliant on the activities provided by either their school or their host families. Scott Stewart from Grand Forks Secondary School in Grand Forks says that they offer international students "a blend of strong academic as well as athletic and musical opportunities". He explains, "We have a recreation facility as well as a skateboard park and other amenities. Our students get involved in musical and theatre productions as well as participate in numerous trips." The school also plans to offer a baseball sport academy for the 2007/2008 school year that will be available to international students.

Canada is well known for the wealth of outdoor activities it offers and the city of Vancouver is a good destination for those wanting to experience city life while still being able to explore the great outdoors. "There are times in the year when you can ski in the mountains, mountain bike through the hills, play a round of golf and go sailing on the ocean – all in one day," relates Matheson.

Lovers of winter sports are also particularly well catered for in British Columbia, he continues. "There are world class ski areas in West Vancouver and Whistler Mountain, site of the 2010 Olympic Games, is only one-and-a-half hours away," he says.

International students also get the chance to compete in their school sports teams, Carrigan notes. "All possible sporting activities from swimming and ice-skating to school sports teams are available in Richmond," he says. "In addition there are many entertainment options there. Richmond has cinemplexes, many shopping malls, bowling alleys, indoor swimming pools and ice arenas."

Steve Hutchison from St Johns School in Vancouver says that trips to athletic competitions across Canada are organised by his school, which also offers trips to "leadership conferences for students in various areas of Canada" and numerous local field trips and outdoor activities such as camping. He adds that active involvement with the wider community is encouraged among international students. "St Johns has developed an atmosphere where service to the community has enabled students to recognise the impact they are able to make on the community beyond St Johns," he explains.

Many schools in the province provide opportunities to get involved with local organisations, according to Rettich. "Students can become involved in the community by joining sports teams, musical organisations, volunteer organisations, students' government and working with the local multicultural organisations," he says.

All these educators are members of the Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand



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focus

The ITP sector in New Zealand

New Zealand's institutes of technology and polytechnics offer many advantages to international students and are increasingly being seen as an attractive option.

The ITP sector, incorporating institutes of technology and polytechnics, has existed as part of New Zealand's education landscape for over a hundred years and, according to the representative group for the sector, ITPNZ, has been hosting international students since the 1980s.

Christine Wright, International Centre Manager at the Eastern Institute of Technology Hawke's Bay in Napier, says that these publicly-funded institutions have much to offer international students, often complementing programmes offered in universities. "The main advantage of a polytechnic education for international students is that they can begin mainstream academic programmes at a level which is appropriate for their English language ability," she underlines. "So polytechnics offer a pathway to higher level study, eg. degrees, by allowing students to first do a certificate or diploma."

In fact, ITPs offer courses that span the whole range of qualifications available, from foundation and certificate programmes up to full degree and postgraduate studies. Many ITPs also have their own English language centres and Wright hopes that this is a trend that will continue across the sector in the future, to enable international language students to "enjoy the tertiary student lifestyle", as well as broadening the range of educational pathway options available.

The flexibility of the academic programmes available in ITPs, as well as their close relevance to the global workplace, is a possible reason why these institutions have been less badly hit by the recent decline in international students coming to study in New Zealand. The number of full-time fee paying international students at New Zealand education providers decreased by 15 per cent between 2003 and 2005, according to Ministry of Education figures, while international students at ITPs decreased by just five per cent over the same period.

Michelle Buys from Universal College of Learning in Wanganui says that they have continued to attract international students and have recently expanded their courses. In particular, a new course in computer graphic design has been popular with Malaysians due to the "many worldwide employment opportunities", says Buys, while Indian students are attracted to the "vocational study and applied skills" on offer at the institution.

Other popular courses at New Zealand's ITPs include nursing, business, tourism, and also trade programmes, such as carpentry and furniture design, often in response to skills shortages within the country. Gisela Purcell from Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology notes that specialised programmes, particularly those that are very hands-on or research-based, are very popular with overseas students. She adds, "We are doing more niche marketing in the areas of viticulture, fisheries [and] visual arts."

Both Purcell and Wright note that Chinese students make up a large proportion of their international student body, although this could change in the future. "Our largest nationality is still China," says Wright, "because those students who came to first learn English [in New Zealand] in the boom years are still completing their degree studies. However, India is now increasing and helping replace the China market to some extent."

Purcell comments that while Chinese students continue to be attracted by their business course options, other student markets such as Sweden, Korea, Japan and Germany are also important. "Swedish and German students especially love the environment in the Nelson and Marlborough regions," she adds, while also noting that the institute's "good reputation and its good relationships with agents and partners" has also been crucial to sustaining international enrolment figures.

subject focus

Short courses at UK high schools

High schools in the UK are increasing their range of short-term courses to attract international students with a variety of different study goals.

With more and more high schools in the UK developing their own ELT facilities and international study centres to support international students on full-time courses, many are finding that they have the facilities to cater for short-term language students too. A number of short-term courses are now available for international students wanting to either experience a taste of life in a UK high school or improve their academic English skills in preparation for more long-term study goals, and schools are becoming particularly innovative in their offerings.

Hazel Ormrod from Padworth College in Reading says that their short-term language programmes were developed to improve the English skills of students about to embark on A-level courses. "We have offered short-term courses for international students for more than 30 years," says Ormrod. "We offer both language holiday courses during the Easter and summer holidays for students aged nine-to-16 and throughout the academic year for students aged 11-to-16 and intensive, general and academic English for students aged 13-to-19."

Many of the short-term courses offered by high schools in the UK, including those offered during the summer holidays, incorporate both academic and language tuition, and this sets them apart from the courses offered by the UK's popular language school sector. At Royal Russell School in Croydon on the outskirts of London, where international students can undertake a semester-long programme during the academic year, Mary King emphasises, "The course is not a specialist language course, it is part of the normal English curriculum with extra language support."

At d'Overbroecks College in Oxford, international students can take part in a whole range of short-term programmes, from language and activity camps in the summer to semester-long programmes during the academic year, although Jessica Whiskin at the college points out that most of their short-term students have longer-term academic goals. "Many of the students who choose to come on our summer programme are students who will be continuing on to do either GCSEs or A-levels with us from September," she says.

The college has developed its academic English programme, however, to appeal to a wide variety of students. "We work around a weekly theme so that the language taught arises naturally from the subject content," explains Helen Wood, Head of Esol at the school, who adds that the approach is "ideal for ambitious learners who will use English in their school or university education, but has proved a real hit with short holiday course students as well".

According to schools, the largest nationalities on their short-term academic courses tend to be from Europe. Katja von Schweitzer from St Mary's Hall in Brighton notes a French and German bias to enrolments due to the fact that such courses "fit with their educational systems".

However, at Padworth College, Ormrod reveals a more varied nationality mix among the students on their short-term courses and points to a widening spread of interest into new student markets. "In recent years, we have seen more students [enrolling] from the Middle East and the up-and-coming eastern European states," she confirms.

Location	Name of school	Range of courses offered	Min. age of students	Min. English proficiency	EFL support?	Accommodation options
Bedford	Bedford School Study Centre	s,s,u,y	10	n	✓	r
Brighton	St Mary's Hall	m,s,y	8	e	✓	r
Croydon	Royal Russell School	s,y	11	i	✓	r
Dorking	St Teresa's Prep and Senior Schools	m,s,y	11	e	✓	r
Fleetwood	Rossall School	m,s,s,u,y	11	b	✓	r
Oxford	College of International Education	m,s,s,u,y	-	n	✓	h
Oxford	d'Overbroeck's College	m,s,s,u,y	15	i	✓	h,r
Oxford	St Clare's	m,s,s,u,y	15	i	✓	r
Reading	Padworth College	m,p,s,s,u,y	9	n	✓	r
Saundersfoot	Netherwood School	s,y	-	e	✓	r
Southwold	Saint Felix School	m,s,y	11	i	✓	r
Surrey	Tasis The American School in England	m,s,s,u,y	12	b	✓	r
Tenbury Wells	Saint Michael's College	m,s,s,u,y	10	b	✓	h,r
various	British Association of Boarding Sch. Short Courses	su	-	b		r

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