



YOUR SOLUTION TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Dear Partner:

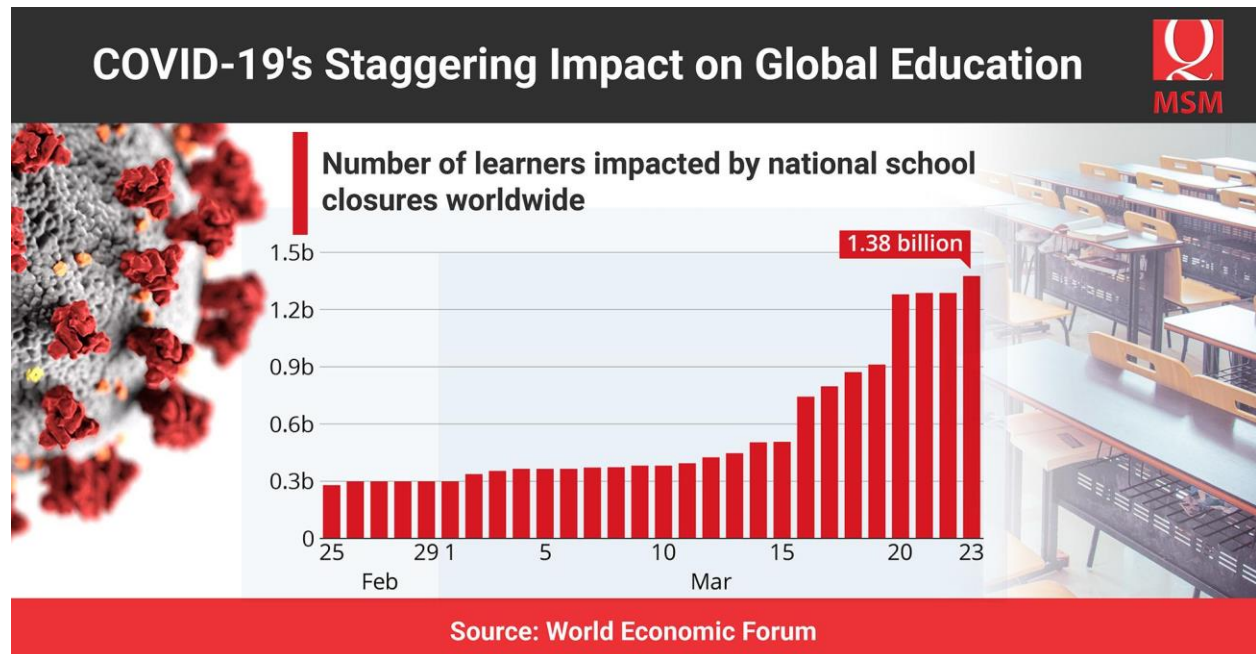
With the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities around the world are moving into uncharted waters, addressing the full suite of international student needs and significant impacts on their enrollment.

As the leading global platform serving international students, affiliate agents, and higher education institutions, MSM maintains a proactive stance in engaging with our partners and planning for the present and the months following the projected recovery from the global crisis.

We do this through a resilience-focused approach based on three M's: market intelligence, manpower, and mitigation. We employ **keen, up-to-date market insight** and have **moved our 250+ strong manpower to virtual platforms**, so we can continue to support our partners and agents for **prompt risk mitigation and management**.

COVID-19's Impact on Student Enrollment

We are dealing with staggering numbers worldwide. According to UNESCO data as of March 23, more than 1.3 billion learners have been affected by the pandemic. An education tracker dated March 25 noted that schools in 188 countries have closed their campuses and more than 1.5 billion students have been affected. Some 63 million educators have been forced to transition to a platform they are not readily familiar with.

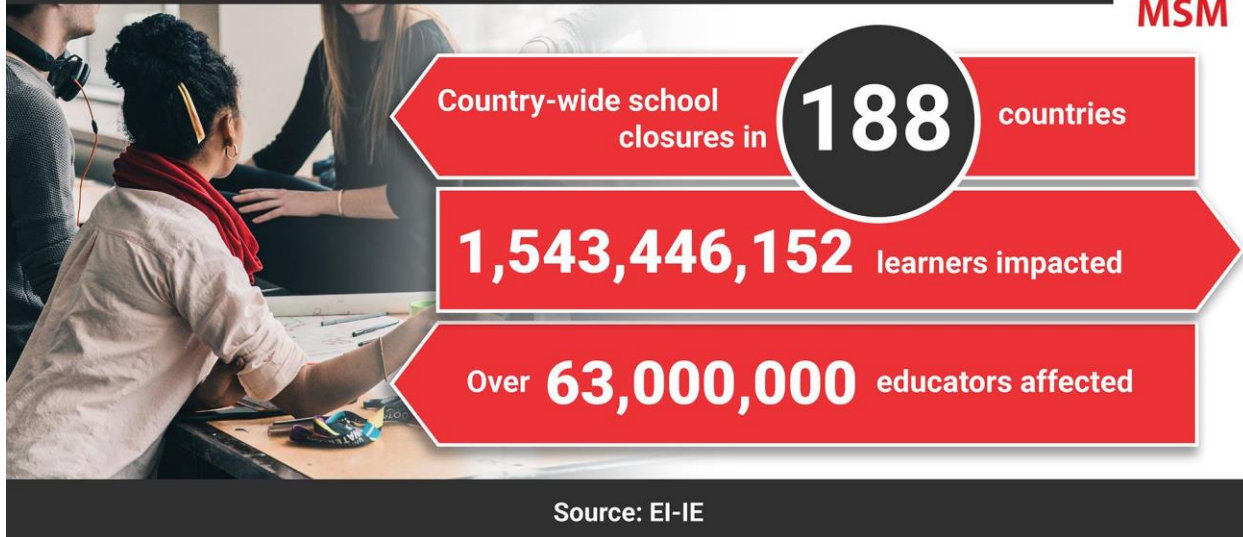


The number of students affected by COVID-19 has reached billions.



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COVID-19 and its Impact on Education



Worldwide, schools from 188 countries have closed their campuses, which has affected both students and teachers.

Statistics show that more than 80 percent of learners worldwide have been affected by campus closures and the uncertainty of the future. They have either moved to online classes or completely shuttered their schooling while on lockdown. While schools and students hope that the effects on education will be temporary and short-term, there are indications that enrollment for the upcoming term, at least, will continue to be challenged.

International students have been massively affected on several fronts.

Travel bans and border closures have forced the majority of students to go back or stay in their home countries. Flight cancellations have forced some to be stuck in places where they have no family or friends to rely on financially and emotionally.

As featured on the MSM Reporter, testing organizations [have canceled](#) standardized tests like IELTS and TOEFL in several countries. This affects the applications of thousands of students who must show proof of English proficiency to their target universities.

Further, the economic consequences of the pandemic also take their toll on international students, who [rely on scholarships, grants](#), and part-time jobs to sustain their education. With organizations rerouting funds for healthcare, and campuses and other establishments closed, international students may find it extremely hard to scrounge enough money to pay their tuition for the upcoming term.



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Schools that rely on international student enrollment, on the other hand, will feel the strain not only on their student population but also on their finances.

Before the pandemic, international student enrollment has been continuously increasing. In particular, students from China and India have been flooding schools in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia. In Canada alone, international education accounts for over \$16 billion in economic benefits.

The longer travel bans, border restrictions, and lockdowns are enforced, the more chances there will be of international students being physically and financially unable to enroll or even go back to their host institutions.

According to a recent survey from the European Association for International Education (EAIE), more than 70 percent of outbound and almost 50 percent of inbound [student mobility have been affected](#) by the pandemic.

Student mobility in China, where the coronavirus disease began, has been affected the most. When news of the virus spread, China closed the borders of certain provinces. Initially, Australia barred international students who travel directly from China. Then it amended its regulations, allowing students to enter the country only if they spend 14 days in quarantine in another country before entry.

As the virus itself spread across the world, more countries imposed travel bans that affected all types of student mobility. US schools began recalling students who were part of short-term study abroad programs and stopped all outbound programs. Schools began closing mid-term, with students advised not to come back to the campuses after spring break.

The UK began imposing lockdowns only in late March, but schools already began closing their campuses prior to it.

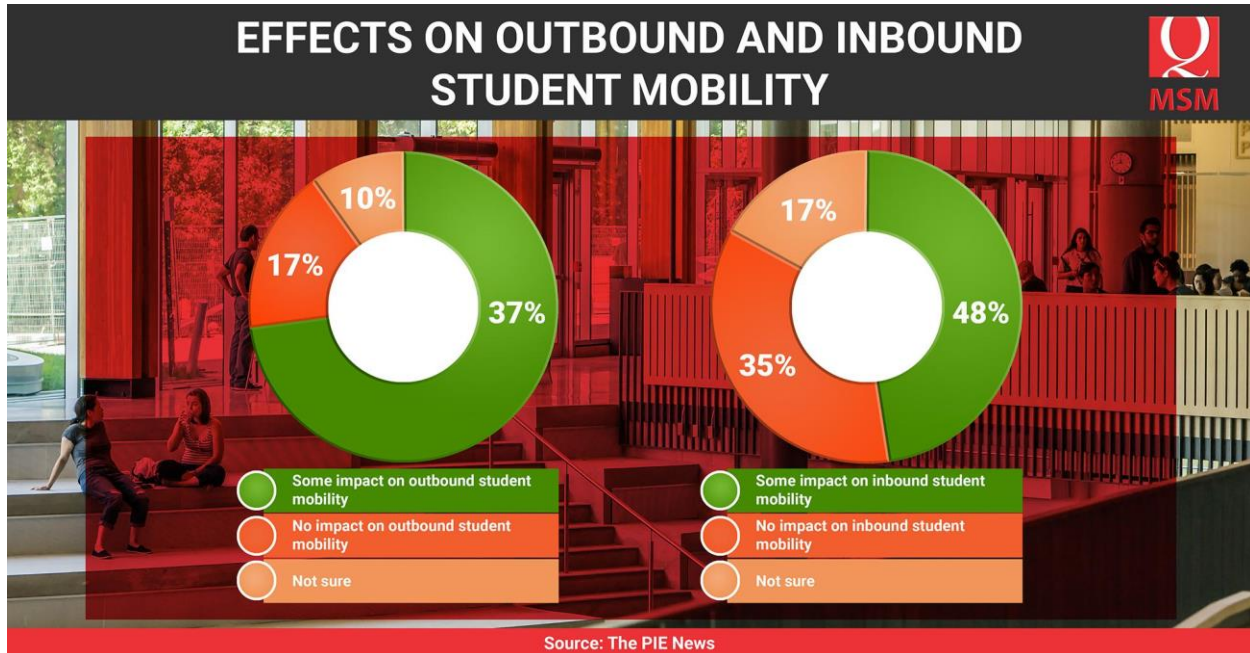
With classes moving online, many schools have had to refund fees for dormitories and meals.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has affected not just the current term for both students and their schools, as there is significant evidence that its impact will be felt in the coming September 2020 term as well.

Some administrators, while stressing that communication with students and parents alongside reassurance are important, [remain hopeful](#) that the pandemic will be temporary and will not have lasting effects on enrollment.



Holistic Support for International Students



The pandemic has affected both inbound and outbound student mobility.

International students have been affected differently from domestic students during this crisis. Universities and colleges may explore the following measures:

Responding to the needs of three cohorts of international students

1. Prospective students

- If you are currently using only SDS language entry requirements, consider reducing English language requirements, equivalent to the set of rules for domestic students, at least for the next two intakes.** The demand for an international degree or diploma will likely slow down after COVID-19, and remote institutions will be particularly vulnerable to difficulties in enrollment. Schools should not deem this measure a way of lowering standards. Instead, relaxed English language guidelines for acceptance can help institutions cast a wider net and capture students who may be lagging behind in their English skills but are likely academically outstanding. Should the students lack English language skills, schools can implement local language programs to help students improve and get up to speed.
- Issue offer letters and admission letters in two (2) working days** - a show of commitment to expediting the process for eager learners at a time of distress and uncertainty.



- **Offer scholarships and financial aid**, which will ease the burden and worry of academically qualified prospective students.
- **Forge a strong online presence via webinars and interactive sessions to reach out to agents and students.** These agent networking summits, student resource sessions, and other expert-led learning initiatives will sustain an institution's recruitment momentum amid lockdowns and set the stage for aggressive on-ground marketing as soon as the crisis ends.

2. International students who have received their visas but have NOT left their home country

- **Assure students of their ongoing eligibility for the post-graduation work permit (PGWP).** According to recent government updates, eligibility for the PGWP program won't be affected if in-class courses are being moved to an online-only format due to COVID-19. International students who already have a study permit or obtained approval may begin their classes while outside Canada and complete up to 50% of their program while outside, if they cannot travel to Canada sooner. You can then get online classes started, if you wish to. PGWP is a unique benefit and differentiator in completing a Canadian education, and the opportunities it espouses prepares students to be productive members of the workforce.
- **Continue engaging with them while they are in their home country, so they do not lose interest or change their study plans out of anxiety.** This can be done via effective marketing touchpoints such as emailers, social media connections (Facebook Groups, etc), webinars and interactive sessions, and personal communications regarding institutional updates, student services, and continuing reassurance.

3. International students enrolled in their program and staying at the college

- **Offer payment plans for the next semester**, which will assuage fears or economic uncertainty brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Provide comprehensive assistance related to meals, access to medicine and supplements, and internet access to connect with family and loved ones back home.** Student and socio-civic associations are very helpful at this time, ramping up efforts at local food banks and other forms of relief for stranded students.
- **Advise on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)**, which may provide temporary income support to people who have stopped working due to COVID-19. The CERB provides \$500 a week for up to 16 weeks, and can be granted to temporary foreign workers and international students if they meet the other [eligibility requirements](#).



- **Continue engaging with them to manage the fear, worry, and uncertainty of being away from home at a challenging time.** This reflects good crisis management, and offers comfort and a semblance of normalcy during COVID-19.

Other agile support mechanisms

- **Communicate regularly and optimally with students and their parents.** The communications do not have to focus only on admissions; they can be periodic announcements, updates, and messages of support and empathy. Such will be important in establishing a deep connection with the students and assuring them that the schools are doing everything to facilitate their enrollment.
- **Train faculty and administrative staff in handling inquiries.** It is crucial to know what to say and how to reply to students and parents. Faculty and staff should also navigate areas of offering emotional support and practical advice. It is critical that they transcend cultural and communication barriers when dealing with international students - somewhere MSM is adequately equipped to provide timely, sensitive assistance.

Beyond the localized adjustments of universities and colleges, governments can also temporarily ease certain rules for international students.

For example, the UK [has announced visas extensions and switching provisions](#) to accommodate international students who cannot go back to their home countries due to flight cancellations and travel bans. Meanwhile, [Canada has expanded its travel restriction exemptions](#) and added international students with valid study permits in the exemption to its border closures. These adjustments send a strong message to international students that they are valued and are an important voice in the college community.

Resilience in Focus: MSM's Action Plan

Since day one, MSM has taken a fast, agile, and market-leading position in tackling the COVID-19 situation through our full suite of global systems and processes, technology tools, and in-house knowledge database.

For us, being on top of the situation - an unprecedented one at that - means equipping our partners, affiliate agents, and global staff the up-to-date information they need and the decisive leadership that will get organizations and industries through any storm.

We have prioritized sending **multi-phase communications to our 4,500 affiliate agents worldwide**, answering questions on deferment of the May 2020 intake, refunds, and prospects for those who already have their study permits. We have had long, exhaustive conversations with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to provide official answers to agent inquiries.



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Future applicants, for instance, are advised to apply online and study permit processing times will change in the middle of limited resources. IRCC has discouraged paper-based applications. Those students who already have their study permits granted and their intakes being deferred, their visa remains valid. Our teams assist agents on several fronts while MSM continues to release official updates and announcements.

We have launched **MSM Live!** - our webinars and interactive series specially designed for agents, students and their parents, and partner institutions. Each virtual gathering offers a blast of ideas and expert insights on topics such as the movement to online learning, holistic student support, agent management, and prospects and opportunities for international education.

We eagerly await the day that we bounce back from setbacks and normalcy is restored in our operations and marketing activities for our partner schools. But we recognize that we are forever changed by COVID-19. Thus, here are two major undertakings that we have planned in the post-coronavirus situation:

- **A one-stop MSM portal for agents, students, and partner institutions** that is poised to be a game-changer in student application processing times, efficiency, and lead capturing for our respective recruitment strategies. This AI-powered portal will demonstrate our commitment to innovation and taking MSM and all our partners into the future with confidence, new efficiencies and cost savings, and a mindset of growth.
- **An array of resilience-themed student recruitment solutions** that will better prepare our partners for continuity and change management amid the next big global challenge. MSM works round the clock to deliver these results-oriented services, including in the prime areas of e-learning, digital marketing, lead generation, and market intelligence. We cannot face another pandemic without sharpening the saw and having the necessary foresight. We take you, our partners, along with us in these cycles of improvement for our mutual gains.

Eight years ago, MSM was founded not only on a unique business model but a collective resolve to turn risks into opportunities. We do not back down in the face of pandemics simply because we have sound business fundamentals, strong human assets, as well as an innovative spirit that will always seek to remain strong and competitive. Recognizing that we are in the business of trust-bound human relationships in a fast-paced world, we combine our people resources and our technological competitiveness to deliver the best to our customers.



MSM



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My gratitude goes out to each and every one of you for your continued support and confidence in MSM. Know that we are in this together, and your journey is ours to look after and do the best we can to help prosper.

Yours truly,

Sanjay Laul

Sanjay Laul

CEO and Founder, MSM