# The changing nature of work and learning in the COVID-19 era and the impact on international students' health and well-being in Nova Scotia

Eugena Kwon - <https://www.smu.ca/academics/departments/sc-faculty-staff-profiles-eugena-kwon.html>

[Eujeong.kwon@smu.ca](mailto:Eujeong.kwon@smu.ca)

Saint Mary’s University - <https://www.smu.ca>

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated unprecedented academic and career uncertainty for post-secondary students -- with international students being disproportionately impacted in many areas that affect their health and well-being, academic and career planning. Many international students are currently "stuck in limbo" and are experiencing severe challenges in making plans for fall 2020 and onward, given the current travel and border restrictions (CBC, 2020; National Post, 2020). There are concerns that this may potentially have a lasting impact on the retention of existing international students and the future recruitment of students from outside of Canada. In the midst of such unprecedented uncertainty, some are raising concerns about relatively few supports that are currently available to assist international students as they navigate the COVID-19 period (Cheng, 2020; Sharp, 2020).

Our interdisciplinary team will examine the extent to which the changing nature of work and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the health and well-being of the international students in Nova Scotia, Canada. Through a partnership between EduNova Co-operative Ltd and researchers at Saint Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, this study will provide insights into international students' challenges, concerns, and health and well-being in the midst of unprecedented academic and career uncertainty. Overall, our goal of this partnership is to identify international students' immediate needs during the COVID-19 crisis and help relevant stakeholders respond with the adequate support system for international students in a timely manner.

To achieve this goal, three research questions will be addressed in this project.

(1) What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the challenges, concerns, and health and well-being of international students in Nova Scotia? How do their experiences vary depending on their socio-demographic characteristics? (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, country of origin, socioeconomic status, length of stay in Canada)

(2) How are international students currently navigating such times of unprecedented academic and career uncertainty, and what supports are they receiving from their post-secondary institution, community, and government?

(3) Do international students feel prepared for the changing nature of work and learning in the current COVID-19 era, and to what extent would this impact their decision to stay in Nova Scotia?

Using a mixed-method approach[[1]](#footnote-1), we will employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first phase (quantitative method) will involve re-visiting EduNova's International Student Needs Assessments Survey & Campus Asset Survey by expanding to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (target N=1500). This survey has been conducted by EduNova since 2016 to identify what programs, services, and supports are offered to international students studying in the province of Nova Scotia. We will be updating this survey to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second phase (qualitative method) will involve semi-structured, in-depth interviews (N=45-50).

The proposed partnership is crucial to successfully deliver this project. With limited analytical capacity in the non-academic sector, and a need for the province and academic community to better understand and have access to data, EduNova and its post-secondary institution members would benefit immensely from this partnership and research. This partnership will allow us to rapidly identify international students' immediate needs during the COVID-19 crisis, so that relevant stakeholders can utilize the results in implementing adequate response strategies.

$24.840

R$ 126.264,20

1. The term “mixed methods” refers to an emergent methodology of research that advances the systematic integration, or “mixing,” of quantitative and qualitative data within a single investigation or sustained program of inquiry. The basic premise of this methodology is that such integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than do separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)