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## Global Skills Opportunity project to help students gain career-boosting international experience

University of Lethbridge undergraduate students now have more options for international learning with the Global Skills Opportunity (GSO) program.



Funded through the federal government, the program is designed to give students, especially under-represented students, the chance to participate in international learning

experiences and develop intercultural skills. Students who face barriers — Indigenous students, students with financial needs and students with disabilities — can participate in experiences abroad.

“The GSO funding helps many ULethbridge students realize their lifelong dream of travelling abroad during their undergrad, for either a shorter or longer period, allowing them to immerse themselves into the culture and their academics, while worrying less about money,” says Gizelle Tiponut, education abroad coordinator with ULethbridge International.

With the [GSO program](#), studying and working abroad becomes more accessible for a wider group of students. The ULethbridge International office is continuously creating specific programs for underrepresented students and the first Indigenous group will travel to Mexico in May for an immersive opportunity into the Mayan culture. Participants will be part of traditional festivals with dances, costumes, and food, and share about their own Indigenous cultures with the Mayan students.

“The University is committed to educating individuals who will become global citizens with international and intercultural skills and knowledge to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world,” says Paul Pan, executive director of ULethbridge International. “We want to provide our graduates with global perspectives to enter a highly diverse and competitive job market. The funding will enable our students to experience the world around them and develop the global and intercultural competencies that employers are seeking and that will help them succeed beyond graduation and throughout their careers.”

The types of study-abroad experiences available for funding include faculty-led programs, semester exchanges and short-term study-abroad programs. In addition, virtual exchanges and work-integrated learning placements such as co-ops, applied studies courses, internships and work-study programs are eligible.

“The Career Bridge Centre for Work-Integrated Learning and Career Development is pleased to partner with the Education Abroad program to support this Global Skills Opportunities grant and Go Global! initiative,” says Stacey Gaudette-Sharp, academic director of Career Bridge. “The Career Bridge Centre’s mandate is to offer exceptional work-integrated learning, experiential learning and career services so that every participating student can benefit from an outstanding academic and professional development experience.”

Study-abroad experiences give students skills they couldn’t learn any other way. In addition to their work or studies, the students learn to navigate an unfamiliar culture and perhaps a new language.

“Participating students will develop a range of employability skills and competencies,” says Tiponut. “They will learn to work with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, become better problem solvers and become more independent.”

A dozen ULeithbridge students received the GSO award last fall and 14 more will embark on their adventure this spring. Victoria Lopez, who recently returned from South Korea, says students will gain all sorts of aspects to improve themselves.

“It was an enjoyable, valuable and educational experience that not many people can do,” she says. “If someone is considering studying abroad, I would definitely recommend they do it and experience the GSO opportunity. Personally, I feel I’ve become more mature and independent. I’ve gained confidence and grown to appreciate meeting new peoples from all over the world.”

Visit the ULeithbridge [International website](#) for more information.

### **About the Global Skills Opportunity**

Global Skills Opportunity is a national outbound student mobility program that is expected to enable more than 16,000 Canadian college and undergraduate-level university students from across the country to acquire the global skills employers want and the Canadian economy needs. A key component of the Government of Canada’s International Education Strategy, Global Skills Opportunity is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada and is administered jointly by Colleges and Institutes Canada and Universities Canada.

Compared to similar countries, fewer Canadian students — only about 11 per cent of university undergraduates and three per cent of college students — participate in work or study abroad experiences during their studies. The new program stands to change that. By empowering post-secondary institutions to implement innovative solutions to barriers to participation, Global

Skills Opportunity will expand the horizons of Canadian students from coast to coast, and improve Canada's competitiveness on the world stage.

This news release can be found online at [Global Skills Opportunity](#).

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