

3 Questions US Institutions Should Consider During the COVID-19 Crisis

Description

US institutions looking to recruit international students during the global pandemic should keep in mind these key insights from recent QS coronavirus survey analysis.

Wondering how US institutions can best target and communicate with prospective international students during the coronavirus crisis?

A recent [QS white paper](#) has revealed that students interested in the US are continuing to delay or defer studies, are spending more time online researching institutions, and are considering several new factors to determine whether to study abroad.

With a substantial volume of prospective international students still interested in studying in the US, the report answers many questions that international offices at US institutions are asking at this time.

Are students around the globe still interested in studying in the US after so many pandemic-related disruptions?

To better understand how study plans were being affected, prospective international students interested in the US were asked to choose the most common types of disruptions to studying abroad.

The following factors impacted students' ability to study in 2020: delays to visa application/processing (33%), government restrictions on leaving one's home country (32%), or restrictions on arriving in a new country (29%).

These barriers have impacted students' plans to study in the US in a number of ways. Over half of the student respondents interested in the US, or 55%, said that they now intend to defer or delay their studies until next year.

Roughly 10% of students said that they now intend to study in a different country, and 6% said that they no longer wish to study overseas.

This may indicate that, as government actions challenge international student mobility, these students will become more open to considering other study destinations outside of the US, or cancelling their study abroad plans altogether if such restrictions continue.

Is the US still considered a safe study option for international students during the coronavirus crisis?

In order to answer this question, let's explore student expectations around safe study conditions. As the global health crisis continues to pose a threat to overseas travel and in-situ educational opportunities, we asked respondents when they would feel comfortable travelling overseas to study.

Students ranked which factors would contribute most to making this decision, and it's interesting to note that open campuses and face-to-face instruction (47%) seemed just as important as having a vaccine readily available (46%).

The third most important factor was related to how many coronavirus cases were in their country of study (40%). As the US currently holds roughly [25% of the world's coronavirus cases](#), the nation is at a clear disadvantage in this respect.

Regardless of how safe study conditions are perceived to be in the US and indeed around the globe, we found that the majority of prospective international students felt supported by institutions during the coronavirus outbreak.

When asked how effective universities have been in supporting international students, 10% of respondents said that institutions have been extremely effective, 22% said very effective, and nearly half, or 45% said moderately effective. Only 7% chose not at all effective, and another 16% said slightly effective.

Is the US still an attractive study destination for international students?

When asked which countries' governments had managed the coronavirus crisis the best, the US was ranked at the bottom of a list of 38 nations, chosen by just 2% of students.

New Zealand, on the other hand, was chosen by 32% of students as handling the coronavirus well, and South Korea, the second-highest ranked country, was chosen by 9% of students.

Despite our findings that the US government's coronavirus response is affecting international student choice, the US still maintains its standing as a leading study destination.

The US was the second-highest ranked study destination with 38% of students interested in applying to institutions there. Our respondents were slightly more interested in the UK (41%) and slightly less interested in Canada (35%).

Do these perceptions influence student choice? Just over half of our respondents (56%) stated that they have reconsidered where they want to study based on how governments have managed the coronavirus crisis.

This would suggest that, while the way in which governments handled the coronavirus outbreak impacts the student decision-making process, it had not strongly dissuaded our respondents from choosing countries that did not handle the outbreak well as their top study destination.

To learn more about how prospective international students choose a country of study, how they feel about online learning, and what they expect from US institutions during the global pandemic, download the white paper: [What COVID-19 Means for International Students Interested in the US](#).