International education is the profession of designing, managing, and facilitating programs and activities that help participants to appropriately, effectively, and ethically engage in interactions with culturally diverse people and ideas, often across national borders. Based on their belief in the power of education to foster peace and address critical global issues, international educators seek to make a positive impact on society by advancing programs that foster meaningful engagement across cultures.

International education programs strive to help participants develop global competence, which can be defined as “the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues; to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others; to engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with people from different cultures; and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” (Asia Society and OECD 2018, 5). Developing global competence in students has become an urgent need at all levels of education. Global competence is considered integral to ensuring economic competitiveness; furthering the ability to solve global issues; cultivating diversity, inclusion, and peace; and promoting engaged citizenship.

Often, international education involves the movement of people across national borders through study abroad programs, international service-learning, international research partnerships, intensive English programs, and more. These educational programs and experiences move students (or participants of any age) out of their comfort zones and into a process of observation, reflection, and experimentation, prompting personal and professional growth. The field seeks to balance student advising and support with the inherent discomfort of crossing cultures to create the optimal conditions for intercultural learning.

Recognizing that a minority of individuals participate in programs involving international travel, the international education profession has expanded to include cross-cultural education efforts “at home.” These programs seek to encourage intercultural learning
by making educational institutions more international in focus. Some of the approaches taken include integrating international content in the curriculum, teaching world languages, and using technology to connect individuals and classrooms around the world. A strategic planning process referred to as “internationalization” directs the efforts of the educational institutions.

*The International Education Handbook: Principles and Practices of the Field* identifies the research, trends, challenges, and expectations of good practice that inform the profession of international education. As such, this book serves as a guide for graduate students, new professionals, and those seeking to broaden their understanding of this dynamic field.

The Profession of International Education

International education is a rapidly growing field. Across almost all metrics, there has been a steady increase in participation over the past 2 decades.

- 5 million higher education students studied outside of their home country in 2018, a dramatic increase from 2.1 million students in 2001 (Institute of International Education 2018b).

- More than 1 million international students studied in the United States in 2018, which is more than double the number from 1999 (Institute of International Education 2018a).

- The number of international schools has grown sevenfold over the past 25 years, with more than 7,500 international schools serving almost 4 million students in 2015 (Hallgarten, Tabberer, and McCarthy 2015).

- Almost 90 percent of universities surveyed worldwide reported that internationalization is of high policy importance for the leadership within their universities (Egron-Polak and Hudson 2014).

While international education has existed for centuries, the profession itself is young. In decades past, people usually got into the field by chance, perhaps tasked, as an addendum to their existing job, with “looking after” international students or “taking care of” study abroad programs. These individuals may have been given such responsibilities because of their past travel experience or foreign language skills. However, over the past 30 years or so, the field has professionalized, especially in the United States and other developed countries (Hoffa and DePaul 2010).

With the growth in international education participation, and its importance in institutional strategic plans as well as national government policies, there has been a mounting need for trained professionals to create and administer international education programs. International educators may work in a wide range of sectors including education
abroad, international student and scholar services, language programs, citizen diplomacy, and youth education, to name a few. These professionals may have specialized knowledge in such areas as program design, student advising, training and facilitation, curriculum and instruction, marketing and recruitment, admissions, student services, risk management, communications, assessment, and business management. Increasingly, it is being recognized that internationalization requires the efforts of skilled professional international educators to be successful (Hunter 2018; Brandenburg 2016).

International education is no longer an add-on task, but rather the career focus of more than 10,000 specialists in the United States, and many more worldwide. A growing number of international education-related professional associations offer training and networking opportunities, research on the field has become more robust, and standards for ethical practice have been established. Additionally, graduate programs are flourishing and a cadre of new professionals are intentionally choosing a career in international education (Woodman and Punteney 2016; Friedman and Reza 2019).

**International Education Professionals**

Many international educators have had at least one deeply impactful intercultural experience prior to embarking on the profession. They may have been raised in a bicultural household, lived abroad as a third culture kid, immigrated to a foreign country, or married someone from another culture. They may have studied outside of their home country, worked abroad, or collaborated with individuals from around the world.

One of the resonant themes in the career paths of international educators is, often, the learning and personal growth they have experienced through their intercultural interactions and how passionate they are about facilitating similar opportunities for others (Streitwieser and Ogden 2016). In addition to contributing to the personal and professional growth of program participants, the international education profession brings many benefits to the practitioners themselves. This work offers avenues for:

- Engaging in lifelong intercultural learning;
- Developing a network of contacts and connections around the world;
- Making a difference in the lives of individuals;
- Contributing to global peace and understanding; and
- Pursuing ongoing professional growth and development.

The field is dynamic and constantly adapting to changes in the global environment, adding to the challenges and excitement of a career in international education. The rewards of
the field draw many people to the profession. This means that entry-level professional positions in the field are often highly competitive.

**Job Marketplace**

International education professionals may have educational backgrounds in a variety of disciplines including languages, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, business, and education. Coming from such a diverse range of personal and academic backgrounds, it is necessary for international education professionals to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to serve the field. For this reason, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the world’s largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange, compiled a comprehensive listing of the competencies needed by international education professionals.

The *NAFSA International Education Professional Competencies* (2015) was developed based on multiple rounds of feedback from focus groups, volunteer member-leaders, and invited reviewers and a survey of 2,000 international educators. The resulting guide identifies eight cross-cutting competencies that apply to most, if not all, positions within the international education field. The eight cross-cutting competencies are advocacy, communication with stakeholders across campus and community, financial stewardship, human resources, information technology, intercultural communications, leadership, and strategic planning (NAFSA 2015). Beyond these skill areas, additional competencies are described for professionals working on comprehensive internationalization, education abroad, international enrollment management, and international student and scholar services (NAFSA 2015). Each competency is broken down into component skills based on whether an individual works in a role providing direct service to students/program participants, in management, or in strategy and policy.

The *NAFSA International Education Professional Competencies* can be used by supervisors and mentors as a tool to help create professional development plans for mentees. The *Competencies* can also be used to prompt discussion among groups of practitioners or as a framework for creating professional development trainings. It is recommended that individuals consult the document to identify their current strengths as well as areas in which to seek professional development. The NAFSA Career Print Tool is an online assessment tool, based on the *Competencies*, that allows individuals and teams to identify their competencies and areas for growth. Based on the results, Career Print generates lists of resources specific to the individual or team.

In order to be competitive for hiring, or for career advancement, it is crucial that individuals seek professional development and training through graduate education or the many opportunities offered by professional associations such as NAFSA. Along the same line, this volume can assist individuals entering the international education field or transitioning to
new sectors within the field as it offers foundational content, insights, and resources to help professionals build or strengthen their skills sets to better serve their communities.

Chapter Overview

*The International Education Handbook: Principles and Practices of the Field* is organized into 10 chapters. The first chapter, “Trends in International Education,” introduces the broad global context in which international education operates and the factors that are affecting the field. “Global Competence,” chapter 2, examines the goals of international education programs, asking crucial questions such as: What is global and intercultural competence? Why is it an important goal of education? And how do we know if students are developing it? The third chapter on “Internationalization” centers on the process of making higher education institutions more international in focus, identifying strategies and tactics that are commonly utilized.

The next six chapters each explore a different professional sector within the international education field: “Education Abroad,” “Experiential Education,” “International Enrollment Management,” “International Student and Scholar Services,” “International Schools,” and “Citizen Diplomacy.” Each chapter introduces the topic; defines key terms, concepts, and challenges; offers a sense of the history and scope of the sector; describes the primary responsibilities of professionals working in the sector; and recommends resources for further study. The final chapter, “Related Fields,” provides an overview of a collection of professional specializations that have some overlap with the international education field.

Beyond presenting a specific topic or sector, each of the chapters touches on central themes that have broad applicability across the field. For example, “Trends in International Education” looks at the economic and political forces that are influencing the field. “Global Competence” examines the principles behind assessing learning. “Internationalization” discusses the processes of strategic planning and gaining stakeholder support. “Education Abroad” describes principles of program design and introduces student development theory, while “Experiential Education” offers recommendations for establishing reciprocal community partnerships and facilitating student reflection. “International Enrollment Management” introduces the fundamentals of recruitment, admissions, and retention. “International Student and Scholar Services” considers advising models and cocurricular programming. “International Schools” analyzes the connections between K–12 education and higher education, with an emphasis on teacher training and development. And “Citizen Diplomacy” delves into the role of government in international education. Extremely significant across all sectors, and an essential theme in each chapter, is the importance and challenge of assessment. Issues of diversity and inclusion are also explored throughout the book, as are questions of ethics and equity. These themes are broadly relevant to the field, beyond the specific chapters in which they are introduced, and are essential for rising professionals to recognize and understand.
All texts have their limitations, and this one is no different. While the professionalization of international education is underway around the world, the United States is one of the areas in which the profession is well established. As a result, much of the research and many of the resources noted are produced in the United States, resulting in a disproportionate focus on the U.S. context in the literature of the field. Compounding the bias, the author of this publication is based in the United States. The result is that this volume emphasizes the U.S. context, while striving to include information and resources from other parts of the world as they are available to the author.

The International Education Handbook: Principles and Practices of the Field offers a comprehensive overview of the field of international education, showcasing specializations and highlighting the information and resources most relevant to professionals. It introduces some of the different sectors of the field, examining their history, scope, subsectors, theoretical foundations, and trends. The book can be used by new professionals or those seeking to transition between sectors to develop awareness of the vocabulary, debates, challenges, and resources in the field.

Facilitator’s Guide

While relevant to individual readers interested in the field, The International Education Handbook: Principles and Practices of the Field may also be used as a graduate textbook or as a resource for professional training programs. To support this purpose, a digital facilitator’s guide is available as a complement to this book. Coauthored by Katherine Punteney and Jayna Winn, the Facilitator’s Guide provides related content for each chapter of this text, including learning outcomes, key terminology and definitions, central concepts, pre-reading questions, discussion questions, and activities with printable materials. The Facilitator’s Guide reinforces the content of the book through engaging, intentional exercises that resonate with readers. The resource is available as a digital download at www.nafsa.org.

Resources

Below are some additional resources that can support the work and development of international educators.

NAFSA RESOURCES:


- International Educator magazine www.nafsa.org/ie
- NAFSA Annual Conference www.nafsa.org/ac
- NAFSA Career Print careerprint.nafsa.org
- *NAFSA International Education Professional Competencies* www.nafsa.org/competencies/
- NAFSA Regions and professional networking groups www.nafsa.org/Connect_and_Network/
- Network.NAFSA online discussion forum network.nafsa.org

**ASSOCIATIONS:**

- Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) www.apaie2019.org/
- Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) www.aieaworld.org
- Diversity Abroad www.diversitynetwork.org
- European Association for International Education (EAIE) www.eaie.org
- The Forum on Education Abroad www.forumea.org
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators www.nafsa.org

**JOURNALS:**

- *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* www.frontiersjournal.org
- *International Higher Education* ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ihe
- *Journal of International Students* jistudents.org/
- *Journal of Research in International Education* journals.sagepub.com/home/jri
- *Journal of Studies in International Education* journals.sagepub.com/home/jsi

**References**


