

New bridging program at York

RAFAEL BRUSILOW
for Metro Toronto



For internationally educated business and IT professionals who discover their skills aren't accepted in the Canadian marketplace, relief is on the way.

York University is taking full advantage of a recent \$4.5 million grant by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to create a groundbreaking

bridging program that lets internationally educated professional in the fields of business and IT gain crucial Canadian work experience and train to Canadian standards.

Starting on Jan. 20, York's Bridging Program for Internationally Educated Professionals features completely individualized assessment and action plans and is aimed at giving internationally educated professionals crucial

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Canadian work experience.

"One of the things internationally educated people hear all the time is that they need Canadian experience — that's a huge

stumbling block for a lot of people. A key part of the program is the experiential component, and we don't want people to redo their skills, we just want to give them that Canadian context," said Kelly Thomson, faculty lead for the program at York.

Core courses are fully funded by grant money and higher-level optional courses are funded at a rate of 50 per cent as well.

The program was designed from the ground up with input from some of Canada's most prolific employers to ensure internationally educated professionals get trained in exactly the skills the market wants from them.

"We're designing the program in partnership with professional advisory groups composed of representatives from professional organizations and bodies to identify what the market wants to see in terms of skills and competencies for people who want to get hired," Thomson said.

Major employers such as IBM, Research In Motion, KPMG and Ernst & Young have already signed on to advise and participate in the program, and Thomson says they are all committed to making the program a success.

"We're getting really enthusiastic participation from these groups. They're all saying this is a strategic priority for them to make them more competitive for attracting internationally educated professionals," Thomson said.

Mentoring is a big part of the program as many participating employers



Mentoring is a big part of York University's Bridging Program for Internationally Educated Professionals.

have pledged to provide developmental assistance to students, and Thomson hopes the overall program will create an atmosphere of inclusion for all involved.

"We're really hoping to foster a kind of reciprocal relationship so that employers and internationally educated professionals can see what they have to learn from each other. These professionals are bringing a lot more than just their expertise," Thomson said.

Candidates in York's program will receive four months of instruction in business-level English crucial to success in professional positions and identical to what students in the school's international MBA program already receive.

"Right now, the language opportunities for training are very minimal, and the funding provided by this program is crucial for students to have the opportunity to develop their language skills up to a professional level of competence," Thomson.

The overall goal is not only to help new Canadians succeed in their careers, but to ensure Canadian businesses are prepared for the future.

"In Canada, we are just coming to appreciate that the economy is composed of internationally educated people and employers are realizing this is going to be their labour pool for the future," Thomson said.

For more information, visit yorku.ca/makemore.

Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies

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