

**Submission for Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the
Upcoming Federal Budget**

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List of Recommendations

1- That the government significantly increase its support of French-language universities.

2- That the government significantly increase funding for basic research, mobilization of knowledge and social sciences and humanities research and provide grants to maintain existing infrastructure and funding to pay the highly qualified staff needed to operate research equipment.

3- That the government continue to support universities in their efforts to assess the risks posed by research partnerships and take part in the funding of initiatives to strengthen information security at institutions.

4- That the government actively promote the mobility of skills for the development of knowledge and innovation, the development of skills and Canada's favourable position in attracting talent, and that the government address the funding needed to sustainably and significantly improve the system for processing work and study permits.

5- That the government significantly increase the number and value of graduate and postdoctoral scholarships offered by Canada in order to retain and attract the best Canadian and foreign talent.

6- That the government continue its efforts and support universities in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion by introducing new support programs.

7- That universities be able to benefit from new programs focused on climate change, the digital transition or accessibility.

Introduction

With 37,000 students, 7 faculties and 1 school, UQAM occupies an essential place in the Canadian university ecosystem. A leader in progress, staunchly Francophone, inclusive, always open to diversity and the surrounding community, ranked first by *Research Infosource* in terms of research in the general university category (large universities without faculties of medicine), our university innovates every day and finds solutions to social and scientific problems.

UQAM is pleased to be able to share its recommendations with the House of Commons Standing Committee.

In the face of fierce global competition, the federal government must support universities more than ever through substantial financial investments that will allow Canada to remain among the leaders in research and innovation. In addition, given the current labour shortage in this country and the growing need to train talent in many areas, universities are essential partners for the government.

Note that UQAM also endorses the recommendations presented in the submission by the Université du Québec.

Recommendation 1 – That the government significantly increase its support of French-language universities.

A leader among Francophone universities in Canada since its creation, UQAM feels that French-language research and creation are a wealth and a strength for Canada.

UQAM strongly encourages the government to create a mobility scholarship program and significantly enhance existing programs for short stays in Canada for French-Canadian students at a Francophone university in another province.

UQAM also recommends that the government require and provide sustainable funding for scientific productions in both official languages in journals that it funds in whole or in part.

Recommendation 2 – That the government significantly increase funding for basic research, mobilization of knowledge, and social sciences and humanities research and provide grants to maintain existing infrastructure and funding to pay the highly qualified staff needed to operate research equipment.

It must be noted that the grant amounts for supporting innovation greatly exceed those allocated to fund basic research and, therefore, the government must ensure an annual increase in its grants in the three granting councils' leading programs.¹ In this respect, UQAM supports the

¹ SSHRC Insight Program, NSERC Discovery Grants and CIHR Foundation and Project grant programs.

recommendation² by the Canadian Association of University Teachers that the government “increase its investments in basic science by \$600M and allocate \$185M per year thereafter in additional base funding. Particular attention should be paid to the funding of humanities and social sciences, for which the immediate benefits of innovations are harder to measure than technology transfer or the commercialization of products.

UQAM is the first university to have proposed a social innovation model dedicated to social transformation. Although not well known and underfunded, social innovations are intimately linked to achieving Canada’s 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) under its 2030 Agenda. The federal government must therefore ensure that it adequately supports research and creation in the social sciences and humanities that will contribute to solving social and community challenges.

Finally, we must stress the importance of providing both grants to maintain existing infrastructure and additional funding to pay the highly qualified staff needed to operate research equipment.

Recommendation 3 – That the government continue to support universities in their efforts to assess the risks posed by research partnerships and take part in the funding of initiatives to strengthen IT security at institutions.

The increasing importance placed by the Government of Canada on national security issues in research partnerships, particularly under its new guidelines in that respect, creates major financial challenges for universities. The assessment of national security risks in research requires the development of multi-sectoral sustainable structures to support researchers in assessing the risks associated with their research. To ensure the sustainability and quality of those structures, the government must provide recurring funding to allow for the hiring of advisors specializing in research security.

In addition, for the investments in national security to be truly profitable, the government must ensure that its requirements and initiatives are consistent with those currently in place for information security. Thus, although UQAM welcomes the government’s announcement in April 2022 that it would be creating a research security centre, it would like to emphasize that it is essential that its mandates and areas of action be complementary to those of the many existing provincial and federal support structures related to information security. The government must also draw from the provincial legislative frameworks for security in defining its requirements.

Finally, given that the security of university information systems is essential to that of the research data, the Government of Canada must also support and fund initiatives to strengthen institutions’ information security.

² Canadian Association of University Teachers, Success, [Challenges and Opportunities for Science in Canada – Submission to the Standing Committee on Science and Research](#), February 2022.

Recommendation 4 – That the government actively promote student mobility for the development of knowledge and innovation, the development of skills and Canada’s favourable position in attracting talent, and that the government address the funding needed to sustainably and significantly improve the system for processing work and study permits.

UQAM recommends that the Government of Canada be diligent and rapidly and sustainably improve Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s (IRCC) processing of study permit applications from candidates from the international Francophonie, particularly for Francophone countries in Africa.

More broadly, there are persistent and damaging challenges to supporting the mobility of international faculty, researchers and students. It is therefore essential that the government allocate the resources needed to address a situation that undermines the appeal of Canada’s university system for top talent, weakens its ability to meet pressing workforce training needs, and weakens its international position in knowledge production and innovation. The following is a summary of the main problems encountered:

- ⇒ Processing times for study permit applications are long and irregular, depending on the country of origin.
- ⇒ Obtaining work permits for professors in the Temporary Foreign Worker program is also subject to handicapping delays.
- ⇒ The grounds for refusing permits or visas remain unclear and unsubstantiated.
- ⇒ Information from IRCC is difficult to obtain, for university staff, international students and professors.
- ⇒ There is almost no communication from IRCC and it is inconsistent.

The Global Skills Opportunity student mobility program, implemented by Universities Canada to support innovative activities for outbound mobility, was appreciated. We encourage its continuation and enhancement to reach as many students in postsecondary education in Canada as possible.

Recommendation 5 – That the government significantly increase the number and value of graduate and postdoctoral scholarships offered by Canada in order to retain and attract the best Canadian and foreign talent.

The government must encourage young people to attend university and support the training of highly qualified staff. This inevitably requires an increase in the value of postgraduate scholarships. The gap created by the cumulative effect of stagnating scholarship values and the increase in the cost of living, combined with a labour market offering higher wages, have led to less interest in graduate studies among the next generation. The effort to make scholarships competitive again compared to the salaries offered on the labour market must include an indexation program to limit the emergence of significant differences in the future. As well, the number of scholarships offered to Canadian and permanent resident students must be increased

and scholarships dedicated specifically to foreign students need to be added to attract new students.

Since April 1, 2022, the postdoctoral scholarships awarded by the three Councils have been paid out through eligible Canadian host institutions, no longer directly through the organizations. This results in a net loss in the value of the scholarships promised by the granting agency if the host institution's rules require that postdoctoral interns be paid in the form of a salary. As a result, a postdoctoral scholarship of \$45,000 posted on the agency's website will actually be worth 18% less due to benefits. There are two issues here. On the one hand, postdoctoral scholarship amounts are not enough to attract highly qualified staff. On the other hand, it creates unfair competition between graduate institutions that pay postdoctoral interns in the form of scholarships and those that pay the scholarships in the form of salaries.

Recommendation 6 – That the government continue its efforts and support universities in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion by introducing new support programs.

These programs must help universities by supporting reconciliation with the First Peoples, to fight racism, to act for equity and inclusion of women, LGBTQ2+ individuals and persons with disabilities to improve access to equality in employment.

Recommendation 7 – That universities be able to benefit from new programs focused on climate change, the digital transition or accessibility.

Infrastructure investments must be accelerated not to only address outdated buildings but also to make them more climate-resilient. The government could thus extend the criteria for funding programs to universities.