



Improving financial support for graduate students



Brief submitted by the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research for its study of the Government of Canada's graduate scholarship and post-doctoral fellowship programs

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To supplement the brief submitted by the Université du Québec (UQ), the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) is pleased to be able to contribute to the study on the Government of Canada's graduate scholarship and post-doctoral fellowship program.

UQO agrees with the UQ network that it is high time action was taken to increase the level of support that Canada provides for training the next generation of scientists and highly qualified personnel through its graduate scholarship programs.

UQO strongly supports the four recommendations set out in the UQ's brief, because they align with the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Science and Research's first report. The four recommendations are the following:

Recommendation 1: That the annual value of graduate scholarships in Canada be increased by 50% and that they be indexed annually to inflation.

Recommendation 2: That the number of graduate scholarships that Canada offers to master's and PhD students be doubled and that a mechanism be implemented for ensuring that the new scholarships are allocated to a wider diversity of student profiles.

Recommendation 3: That the duration of Canada's graduate scholarships be extended from 12 months to 24 months for master's students and from 36 months to 48 months for PhD students, to correspond with the expected duration of most master's and PhD programs.

Recommendation 4: That, in addition to the investments required to implement recommendations 1 to 3, the government increase the granting agencies' total base budget by at least 10% per year for five years in order to support their research grant programs, enabling grant recipients to increase the level of support provided to students through these grants.

In addition to the recommendations listed above, UQO would like to draw the Committee's attention to the following points.

Universities with a regional focus

UQO agrees with the arguments set out in the Bouchard report¹ about how talent is critical for generating the ideas and intellectual property that lead to increased prosperity and well-being. The Bouchard report also notes the importance of supporting talent in all regions and not concentrating funding exclusively in large cities and major universities.

Since UQO is the only Quebec university in the Outaouais region, it plays a vital role in training francophone graduate students in the region. By doing so, it helps boost local research capacity and develop a skilled workforce that will be active both in Outaouais and in nearby regions like Ottawa and eastern Ontario.

UQO's recommendation: Reserve a certain number of master's scholarships and post-doctoral fellowships for universities with a regional focus in order to develop research talent that will stay in the regions and to attract international researchers to those regions.

Scholarships for international students

Unlike European countries like France and Germany, Canada has very few graduate scholarships for international students. These scholarships are either too selective (Vanier scholarships), too short (e.g., CARICOM exchange programs, Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program), or open to a small number of eligible countries. As a result, professors are forced to use their own research grants to support students financially.

UQO's recommendation:

Given that at many universities and in many programs, the majority of PhD students are international students:

- Offer more PhD scholarships for international students; and
- Expand eligibility for Study in Canada Scholarships to more countries, especially countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the international Francophonie (<https://www.educanada.ca/scholarships-bourses/can/institutions/study-in-canada-sep-etudes-au-canada-pct.aspx?lang=eng>).

¹ Bouchard et al., *Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System*, 2023, pp. 21 and 51 and foll.

Université du Québec en Outaouais

Officially created in March 1981, the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO) is a human-scale university with a student population of about 7,000, more than 600 of whom come from 40 countries around the world. UQO is located in Gatineau, which is the fourth-largest city in Quebec and is at the heart of Canada's national capital region. UQO also has a campus in Saint-Jérôme, near Greater Montreal. This makes UQO a key partner in the economic, social and cultural development of the Outaouais and Laurentides regions.

UQO is part of the largest university system in Canada, the Université du Québec network, which includes 10 institutions across Quebec whose primary mission is to make knowledge and culture accessible and to play a leadership role in the growth of Quebec society, both in urban areas in and our regions. UQO also collaborates with many international partners through training and research agreements.

UQO is helping to train and retain workers, but it is also helping to advance and share knowledge, increase research-creation activities, foster innovation and implement crucial regional, national and international partnerships in many niche areas of expertise that have a real impact on the well-being of communities and the growth of businesses in these regions, as well as in Quebec and Canada.