
CAGS ACES



1962–2022

The Canadian Association
for Graduate Studies

Strategic Plan 2023-2027

From the CAGS Board of Directors

“We believe in the transformative power of accessible, relevant, and inclusive graduate education.”

In recent years, we have witnessed graduate education in Canada and across the world undergo a dramatic transformation. New ways of living and organizing our daily lives – both on and off campus – have radically shifted how we think about education and the world of work. Emerging technologies and digital tools have reshaped our relationships with each other, and offered new avenues for connection and engagement between students, educators, and administrators alike.

Indeed, much has changed since CAGS’ last strategic plan was released in 2016, and the Association has worked hard to respond and adapt to new challenges with creativity and introspection. In 2019, we invited an external advisor to conduct a thorough review of our governance policies, which resulted in several important changes to CAGS’ organizational structure, including the addition of new standing committees and two graduate student board members. A core principal throughout this process of renewal was open communication and collaboration with CAGS’ members, and to these ends we conducted a

nation-wide survey in 2021 to better understand their needs. The results of this survey confirmed that our stakeholders wanted programs and services from CAGS that were innovative, accessible, and which complemented their own work in advancing excellence in graduate education. These strategic planning activities concluded with a two-day workshop in the spring of 2022, during which time the board of directors mapped out a shared vision for the future of the Association.

CAGS will be guided by three strategic priorities as we navigate the next four years. We remain committed to enhancing our value to members, and to expanding engagement with the broader graduate education community through innovative, accessible, and inclusive offerings. We aspire to build organizational capacity as we develop these new initiatives, and to increasing our financial resources to better align with current economic conditions. In the following document we outline CAGS’ strategic priorities and goals, and chart a forward-looking path for the years 2023-2027.

CAGS' Mission

The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) is Canada's national organization providing leadership, fostering community, and promoting collaboration to advance excellence in graduate education, research, and scholarship.

CAGS' Vision

CAGS envisions itself as Canada's leader in graduate education, policy, and practice in order to support the formation of individuals who, through scholarship, research, innovation, and practice, contribute to the flourishing of societies in Canada and the world.

CAGS' Values

CAGS believes in the transformative power of graduate education for all individuals from all backgrounds. Our values are grounded by a commitment to transparency, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in all that we do. We affirm and mobilize these core values through workshops, task forces, awards, and an annual conference, and we strive to offer all members of the graduate education community a platform with which to share, listen, and learn from each other. These values and our accountability to members guide CAGS' day-to-day operations and underpin every aspect of this strategic plan.

CAGS' Members

The Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS) is a professional association of more than 60 universities, research institutes, and a broad range of partner organizations in higher education from across the country.

CAGS' institutional members bring together innovative and deeply passionate academic leaders, graduate administrators, faculty supervisors, postdoctoral scholars, and graduate students. Through CAGS, the graduate education community has the opportunity to share information about successful programs, initiatives, and solutions to common concerns. Whether engagement on major policy questions or new practices suggested by colleagues, member participation in CAGS supports a high national standard of graduate education. Collaboration has the potential to support our members' work and to showcase instances of innovation and success. Collectively, the CAGS community helps to shape the public profile and relevancy of graduate education in Canada.

Institutional membership is open to Canadian universities that have established graduate programs.

Associate membership is available to universities, research institutes, graduate student and postdoc associations, and other organizations that provide services related to graduate education or research.



Strategic Priorities

The CAGS board of directors has identified three strategic priorities that will guide the actions we take over the next four years in pursuit of the Association's vision and mission. These priorities provide a framework for aligning the central activities of CAGS, for supporting planning and budgeting, and for tracking progress going forward.

Enhancing CAGS' Value to Members

Expanding Engagement with CAGS Members

Increasing CAGS' Organizational Capacity and Financial Resources

I. Enhancing CAGS' Value to Members

Actions

- Improve the quality and quantity of CAGS' offerings to members, including the Association's website, digital communications channels, and suite of webinars and workshops.
- Develop a summer program for deans, associate deans, and directors to provide mentorship and continuing education opportunities for both new and experienced academic leaders.
- Expand CAGS' collection and analysis of aggregated data from members and other stakeholders in higher education, and leveraging these insights to provide timely and relevant information.

Performance Metrics

- CAGS will have a useful, informative, and easy to maintain website that contains relevant information about CAGS, its activities and projects, and publicly available resources in both official languages.
- CAGS will have increased the number of workshops, webinars, and training sessions offered to members, and seeking input and engagement from the graduate education community in their creation.
- CAGS will launch an inaugural summer program for deans, associate deans, and directors with content and activities delivered in both official languages.
- CAGS will have designed and implemented a system for collecting basic aggregated data from institutional members and stakeholders in higher education with the goal of providing relevant and timely analysis of emerging trends in graduate education.

II. Expanding Engagement with CAGS Members

Actions

- Strive toward a more membership-driven association. Regularly communicating and seeking inputs from CAGS' member institutions to better understand their local and regional needs, and to generate new ideas for projects and initiatives.
- Increase the number of Associate Members in CAGS through direct outreach to Canadian higher education associations and organizations; to regional and provincial higher education stakeholders; and to international universities and associations with an interest in promoting excellence in graduate education.
- Generate greater turnout and engagement from member institutions with respect to CAGS awards, special events, workshops, and annual conference through enhanced promotion and outreach activities.

Performance Metrics

- CAGS will have designed and implemented a practice of conducting personalized engagement between the Executive Committee and academic leaders at member institutions on an annual basis.
- CAGS will have increased the ranks of Associate Members to include ten new universities, research institutes, or other relevant organizations.
- CAGS will have increased the number and diversity of Institutional and Associate Members who participate in our awards, special events, workshops, and annual conference.

III. Increasing CAGS' Organizational Capacity and Financial Resources

Actions

- Increase CAGS' membership dues for Institutional and Associate Members on a regular and predictable basis in order to sustain daily business operations, recurring projects and initiatives, and the annual CAGS conference.
- Expand CAGS' sources of external funding for recurring projects, initiatives, and awards through enhanced sponsorship agreements, applications for grants, and collaborations with partner associations.
- Develop more innovative revenue-generating activities, including premium events such as workshops, summer workshops, webinars, and consultancy work.
- Identify gaps in CAGS' permanent and seasonal HR capacity. Hiring additional administrative and project management staff as needed in order to meet objectives, fulfil our mission, and provide quality service to CAGS members. Expanded use of graduate student internships and experiential learning opportunities.

Performance Metrics

- CAGS will maintain a balanced annual budget while protecting CAGS' contingency funds and long-term investments.
- CAGS will have stabilized budget predictions by instituting regular and predictable increases to membership dues.
- CAGS will have established a procedure for recruiting, hiring, training, and supporting part-time staff and graduate student interns.
- CAGS will continue to offer revenue positive events throughout the year, and to provide two or more occasions for members to gather annually, including the CAGS conference, a summer workshop, and virtual training sessions.