



Canadian Association
for Graduate Studies

Association canadienne
pour les études supérieures

Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Finance

CAGS is the voice of the graduate studies community in Canada. The Association represents the 47 Canadian universities in which graduate and doctoral programs are offered and includes the three graduate student associations that represent 125,000 Canadian graduate students combined.

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Improving higher education in Canada

A growing internationalisation of education systems is currently taking place worldwide. This is displayed in the content of programmes as well as the evolution of student populations, which are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan
Karine Tremblay, Indicators and Analysis Division, Directorate of Education,
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹ (Emphasis is ours.)

Our member universities train the highly qualified personnel our country needs for economic and social development. However, a glance at what happens in the OECD member countries, with which we compare ourselves and inevitably compete with, reveals a unique opportunity to improve graduate education in Canada in two specific ways: 1. by promoting **mobility** among our graduate students and 2. by admitting a larger number of **foreign students** to graduate programs. Our submission essentially deals with these two crucial issues.

1. Promoting mobility among our graduate students

The long term health of Canadian society and economy requires a well educated population with a capacity for innovative thinking. Graduate programs train the next generation of highly qualified professionals, teachers and researchers. We encourage the federal government to assist students from all areas of Canadian society gain access to graduate education through further enhancement of programs such as the Canada Graduate Scholarships.

Graduate students are a vital part of university research teams, many of which are funded by federal government agencies. We encourage continued support of these research programs, and we note the double value of having graduate students participate in them: the students receive practical training in research, while at the same time contributing to the research at relatively low cost to the project.

Jeffrey Simpson, The Globe and Mail, September 11, 2004

In today's **information and knowledge based society**, mobility is increasingly important to the education of graduate students. A number of studies show that a study or research internship at a university in another country or region is an incomparable experience for graduate students in terms of their scientific education and their personal and social development. It allows them to make contacts and build relationships with scientists in their discipline at universities outside of their own. It broadens their horizons by giving them exposure to another community and another culture, and increases their flexibility. It develops their intercultural communication skills and makes them better informed citizens.

In the United States, students often pursue graduate studies in another region or a different State. Within the European Union, student mobility at all levels of education has become one of the European Commission's highest priorities, and it has admittedly enjoyed resounding and unprecedented success. The Erasmus Program, created in 1987 to promote mobility and cooperation at the university level, will accept its millionth student this year. A study or research internship in another European Union country has become a must for any student who is the least bit serious and, consequently, a requirement of employers. Essentially, the Erasmus Program subsidizes three-month to one-year study and research internships in a European Union country by covering travel expenses and the additional living expenses incurred by the recipient.

Our graduate students have not yet experienced or benefited from this type of mobility and exchange. It is urgent that we promote mobility among our graduate students here in Canada. We must provide our students with the opportunity to take part in ground-breaking research nationally, thus contributing to their excellence, all the while enabling them to gain a perspective inherent to carrying out research activities in various environments. Such an initiative would rely on support from two very successful federal programs, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation and the Canada Research Chairs, and complement these programs admirably. It would allow students to use research facilities funded through the former program and to establish contacts with key researchers

supported by the latter. A **research internship** in another part of the country would give students a new perspective, broaden their skills, contribute to a more mature scientific viewpoint, and help them become members of national research networks, thus creating an excellent foundation early on in their careers. In addition, a research internship in another part of Canada would help them expand their knowledge of our country and appreciate its diversity, making them better informed citizens.

Consequently, we recommend that the federal government develop a national research internship program for graduate students.

The above-noted reasons in support of research internships at universities in various regions also apply to studies abroad. Relatively few students, in comparison with U.S. and European students, choose to pursue graduate studies abroad. In a context of **globalization**, we must urgently encourage students to pursue graduate studies in other countries for their own development and to develop the international reputation of our universities. Yet, masters and doctoral students attending university on a Canada Graduate Scholarship cannot use the funds to study abroad. We feel that this is short-sighted and unfortunate.

Consequently, we recommend that recipients of Canada Graduate Scholarships be allowed to use their funds to study abroad.

2. Admitting an increased number of foreign students to graduate studies

Many of the nation's top academic destinations for international students and scholars are experiencing significant declines in the number of applications by prospective graduate international students when compare to last year...

These results suggest that an increasing number of internationally mobile students at the highest levels – those seeking advanced study and research in the sciences, medicine, technology, business, and other fields – are looking for academic opportunities outside the United States.²

Council of Graduate Schools, Washington

Since the end of World War II, U.S. universities have successfully attracted nearly 50% of the students enrolled in foreign universities, including the best among them. Foreign students played a crucial role in university and research development. For example, in 1993, 29.3% of U.S. scientists and engineers were born outside the United States, and among them, 68.7% obtained their degree in the U.S.³ This situation has changed dramatically since September 11, 2001. In fact, the number of foreign students enrolled in U.S. universities has plummeted. From 2003 to 2004, a 32% decline was noted in applications for admission by foreign graduate students at U.S. universities.⁴ Naturally, these universities are alarmed. Where will foreign students go if they no longer go to the United States? This is core of the current issue.

We are facing a veritable **“race for the brightest,”** because the ability to attract the best foreign students results in significant economic benefits to a society. A number of countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, adhere to an aggressive policy for attracting a greater number of foreign students. In 2002, the percentage of foreign students attending university was 17.1% in Australia, 10.1% in the United Kingdom and Germany, and 10% in France,⁵ whereas in Canada, it was only **5.9% (13.2% at the graduate level)** in 2001.⁶

Therein lies an outstanding opportunity for Canada to attract more and brighter foreign students. Canada has a number of advantages in this “race for the brightest,” namely, an excellent network of universities, highly qualified professors and researchers, very good research conditions, and two official languages that are spoken in a vast number of countries, particularly the countries of the Commonwealth and the Francophonie. We must act quickly, as our window of opportunity is very limited in view of the competition.

Consequently, **we recommend that the federal government help universities promote their graduate programs abroad better and that it develop a scholarship program for foreign graduate students admitted to masters or doctoral studies in Canadian universities.**

Moreover, foreign students make excellent immigration candidates because of the degree they have obtained, their language proficiency, their youth, and their integration into society. In fact, countries that work at attracting foreign students actively recruit these students to immigrate afterwards, thus harmonizing their human resource development and immigration policies. As such, since 2001, Australia has allowed foreign students in information technology to apply for their permanent resident's status while they are in the country and without sponsorship.⁷ In the United States, a significant number of foreign students stay in the country. In fact, 56% of the foreign students who obtained a doctoral degree in science or engineering in the United States in 1996 were still living there in 2001.⁸

Again, although data are fragmented, it appears that we are not as successful as our U.S. and Australian counterparts at retaining foreign students in our country. For example, preliminary research conducted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada shows that between 1998 and 2001, only 6% of foreign students obtained their permanent residency in Canada⁹ and eventually became Canadian citizens. This is considerably less than the figures other countries are posting, as we have seen above. We can do much better. Clearly, Canada's immigration policy needs to be adjusted so that we can make the most of the pool of foreign students who are living among us.

Consequently, we recommend that the federal government develop a real foreign student recruitment strategy as part of its immigration policy by making the students' transition from temporary resident to permanent resident easier.

We thank the Standing Committee on Finance for your attention to this matter.

Sources

¹ Tremblay, K. (2004). *Links between Academic Mobility and Immigration*. Paper presented at the Symposium on International Labour and Academic Mobility: Emerging Trends and Implications for Public Policy, World Education Services, Toronto, October 22, p. 2.

² Council of Graduate Schools (2004). *Fewer International Graduate Students Applying to Study in the United States*, Washington.

³ National Science Foundation (1993). *U.S. and Foreign Born Scientists and Engineers with Ph.D. in R&D in the United States*.

⁴ Brown, H. A. and A.D. Syverson (2004). *Findings from U.S. Graduate Schools on International Graduate Student Admissions Trends*, Council of Graduate Schools, p. 2.

⁵ Tremblay, K. *Ibid.*, Table 1.

⁶ Statistics Canada (2004). *University Enrollment, 2001-2002*, July 30.

⁷ Tremblay, K. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸ Tremblay, K. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2003). E-mail to the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, September 18.