



International Student Tuition

- Limiting Increases to Ensure Predictability -

BACKGROUNDER

Ask

The Alliance of British Columbia Students recommends the implementation of a 2% maximum annual increase on tuition by the BC government for international students, in line with the same cap which exists for domestic students' tuition in the province.

Unregulated and Unpredictable

Domestic students are currently protected by BC's Tuition Limit Policy, but no such protections exist for international students. Increases on international student tuition are currently unlimited by the provincial government, which has led to the tuition fees international students pay increasing at a much higher rate year over year than the tuition fees of their domestic counterparts¹. This lack of regulation poses unnecessary barriers to international students being able to access quality post-secondary education in Canada by making increases based on profitability, rather than cost recovery and supporting international students' academic needs.

¹ "Canadian and International Tuition Fees by Level of Study." 2019. Statistics Canada. Accessed online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710004501>

The average international student tuition fee rate for a bachelor of arts degree at the University of British Columbia in 2015 was \$26,399 but by 2018 had risen to \$36,588.² This means that a person taking a four-year program had their tuition increased 38% by the last year of their studies. Tuition for international students in undergraduate programs in BC has risen 485% since 1991³, while comparatively, domestic tuition only rose 185% within the same timeframe.⁴ Tuition for international students in graduate programs was even more grim: rising 726% from 1991,⁵ compared to a 332% rise for domestic students in the same timeframe.⁶ These dramatic increases compound the stress that international students already experience due to discrimination and exclusion while they study in Canada.⁷

Awareness of Inequity

As international students spend more time in BC, they understandably begin to develop more concerns regarding their tuition costs, and become acutely aware of the large difference in how much they pay in comparison to their domestic counterparts, as well as just how much their tuition increases year over year.⁸ The issue is also one of equity: prospective international students from lower or middle income families are often completely priced out of the Canadian education market, decreasing their access to broader educational opportunities.⁹ Across the province, both domestic and international students have become more aware of the inequality that exists on their campuses, and have started petitioning their universities to try and secure fair treatment and dealing for all students, regardless of their status in Canada.^{10,11}

² Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. "Annual Academic Arts Program tuition fees for full-time international students at public post-secondary institutions by Economic Development Region (EDR) and by institution. Academic Years 2011/12 to 2018/19." 2018. Government of British Columbia. Accessed online: <https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/international-tuition-fees-at-public-post-secondary-institutions-by-economic-development-region>

³ "Average International Undergraduate Student Tuition." 2017. Canadian Association of University Teachers. Accessed online: <https://www.caut.ca/content/321-average-international-undergraduate-student-tuition>

⁴ "Average Undergraduate Student Tuition, Domestic." 2017. Canadian Association of University Teachers. Accessed online: <https://www.caut.ca/content/318-average-undergraduate-student-tuition-domestic>

⁵ "Average International Graduate Student Tuition." 2017. Canadian Association of University Teachers. Accessed online: <https://www.caut.ca/content/322-average-international-student-graduate-tuition>

⁶ "Average Graduate Student Tuition, Domestic." 2017. Canadian Association of University Teachers. Accessed online: <https://www.caut.ca/content/319-average-graduate-tuition-domestic>

⁷ "Value Beyond the Dollars and Cents: International Students' Contributions to Canada and Their Need for Supports." 2018. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Accessed online: https://www.casa-acae.com/value_beyond_the_dollars_and_cents_international_students_contributions_to_canada_and_their_need_for_supports

⁸ Adamoski, Adam. "BC International Student Survey: Final Report." 2015. British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer. Accessed online: <http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/ISSReport2015.pdf>

⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. "Factsheet: Tuition Fees for International Undergraduate Students." 2015. Canadian Federation of Students. Accessed online: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2015-05-Factsheet-IntUGrads-EN.pdf>

¹⁰ Watts, Richard. "UVic Students Protest Increase in International Tuition Fees." 2019. Times Colonist. Accessed online: <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/uvic-students-protest-increase-in-international-tuition-fees-1.23771576>

¹¹ Xu, Xiao. "Simon Fraser University Students Protest Decision to Hike International Student Fees." 2019. The Globe and Mail. Accessed online: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-sfu-students-protest-decision-to-hike-international-student-fees/>.

Financial Instability

Unregulated tuition costs make estimating tuition year-to-year impossible. Though international students are required to prove that they have access to enough funding from their home country to finance their education in full before they are granted a study visa¹², when tuition cannot accurately be predicted from one year to the next, there is no way for them to adequately ensure that they have enough funding set aside for their entire education before they come to Canada. To add to this, international students face federal limits on how much they are allowed to work in Canada while on a study visa¹³, and many face discrimination in hiring practices or experience language barriers which make finding work more challenging.¹⁴ This makes it even harder to keep up with tuition and living costs that just keep rising.

Economic Contributions

International students contributed 2.7 billion dollars to BC's GDP in 2016, and their spending translated to 40,499 jobs across the province in the same year.¹⁵ Their economic impact is substantial, and the level of risk that the unpredictability of tuition rates introduces into the BC economy is concerning. International student tuition is considered one of the seven major economic sectors in BC.¹⁶ In other countries where economies have had similar levels of dependence on international student tuition, when international student rates declined, it resulted in largely negative economic impacts which took years to recover from.¹⁷

¹² Immigration and Citizenship. "Eligibility Requirements." 2019. Government of Canada. Accessed online:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit/eligibility.html>

¹³ Department of Justice. "Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations." 2019. Government of Canada. Accessed online:

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-2002-227/section-186.html>

¹⁴ Fakhri, Zeinab et. al.. "Dispelling the 'Rich International Student' Myths." 2019. The Eyeopener. Accessed online:

<https://theeyeopener.com/2019/09/dispelling-the-rich-international-student-myths/>

¹⁵ Kunin, Roslyn & Associates, Inc.. "Economic Impact of International Education in Canada – 2017 Update." 2017. Global Affairs

Canada. Accessed online: <https://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/impact-2017/index.aspx?lang=eng>

¹⁶ Trade and Invest British Columbia. "Industry Sectors". 2019. Trade and Invest British Columbia. Accessed online:

<https://www.britishcolumbia.ca/export/industry-sectors/>

¹⁷ Government of Australia. "International trade in services by country, by state and by detailed services category, financial year, 2011-12". Government of Australia. 2012. Accessed online:

www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/5368.0.55.003Main+Features12011-12?OpenDocument