

# Post-Residency Fees

## Toward Accessible Graduate Studies

### Introduction

High tuition fees are making it more difficult for many students to enter and complete graduate degrees. With average student debt after the completion of a four year undergraduate degree topping \$25,000, many students are discouraged from applying to graduate school. For those who do enter graduate studies, financial difficulties are cited as the primary reason for taking longer to complete their programs or for withdrawing entirely.<sup>1</sup>

The elimination of post-residency fees at some institutions is further reducing the accessibility of graduate programs.

### What are Post-Residency Fees?

“Post-residency fees” are reduced tuition fees paid by graduate students upon completion of course work, during the independent research and thesis writing stages of their degrees.

Post-residency fees are known by a number of names that vary from university to university. Terms such as “maintenance”, “continuing”, “continuance”, “post-program”, “re-registration”, and “additional session” fees are synonymous with post-residency fees.

### Why Post-Residency Fees?

Graduate students working on their theses, dissertations, or research papers utilise fewer university resources. At the same time, during this phase of their studies, graduate students make significant contributions to the core teaching and research functions of a university. Reduced fees are a recognition that senior graduate students are a net gain in resources for the institution.

Most importantly, post-residency fees reduce the inequality of access to graduate studies by making graduate education more financially accessible.

### The Loss of Post-Residency Fees

During the 1990s, universities in Ontario began eliminating post-residency fee systems. Upper year graduate students at those universities were faced with fee hikes of between 40 and 60 percent when post-residency fees were eliminated at their institutions. Today, tuition fees for graduate students in Ontario are \$8,389 per year on average. By comparison, the average annual tuition fees for graduate students in Québec, where post-residency fees still exist, are \$1,927.

While students in Ontario are fighting for the restoration

of post-residency fees, students in other provinces need to ensure this fee system is maintained at their own institutions. Across the country, university administrators and deans of graduate studies are discussing the restructuring of graduate tuition fee models. At some universities, changes are already occurring. In almost every case, the restructuring includes the elimination of post-residency fees, higher user fees, and the reduced accessibility of graduate studies.

### Consequences of Higher Fees

#### Accessibility

Evidence demonstrates that financial barriers are the main reason for post-secondary graduates not continuing their studies.<sup>2</sup> Undergraduates who complete their program with excessive debt loads are less likely to consider entering graduate studies, particularly if it will result in more debt.

#### Quality of Research

Financial hardship also affects the quality of research performed by graduate students. Graduate students under financial stress often shorten their fieldwork, forego publishing and conference presentations, and rush the writing phase of dissertations in order to complete more quickly. Consequently, there is a negative effect on the overall quality of research at universities.

#### Time-to-Completion and Retention

Higher tuition fees force some graduate students to take on additional employment off-campus to finance their education, thereby reducing their time available to research and extending time-to-completion. Heavier financial burdens also increase the risk that graduate students will quit their programs before they finish. Higher fees have a greater impact on those with less ability to pay, such as international students, students with disabilities, single parents, women, and Aboriginal students.

#### International Students' Tuition Fees

The elimination of post-residency fees greatly increases the financial burden on international students. At many universities that have eliminated post-residency fees, the cost of a five-year PhD program has more than doubled. At Queen's University, for instance, a five-year PhD program in the arts cost \$25,550 prior to the elimination of post-residency fees. Today, the same program costs \$53,000. By comparison, those universities where post-residency fees have been

## Canadian Universities With Post-Residency Fees

University of Alberta  
 University of British Columbia  
 Brock University  
 University of Calgary  
 Concordia University  
 Dalhousie University  
 Lakehead University  
 Laval University  
 University of Manitoba  
 McGill University  
 Memorial University of Newfoundland  
 Université de Montréal  
 University of New Brunswick  
 University of Northern British Columbia  
 University of Prince Edward Island  
 University of Regina  
 Simon Fraser University  
 University of Victoria

## Canadian Universities With Full Tuition Fees For Upper-Year Graduate Students

Carleton University  
 University of Guelph  
 McMaster University  
 Mount Saint Vincent University  
 Nova Scotia College of Art & Design  
 University of Ottawa  
 Queen's University  
 Ryerson University  
 University of Saskatchewan  
 University of Toronto  
 Trent University  
 University of Waterloo  
 University of Western Ontario  
 Wilfrid Laurier University  
 University of Windsor  
 York University

maintained are far more accessible to international students. At the University of Manitoba, for example, a five-year PhD program in the arts costs \$18,730.

On average, fees for international students are triple those of domestic Canadian students and are continuing to increase at a faster rate.<sup>3</sup> A post-residency fee system is one way to improve the accessibility of graduate studies for international students.

## Towards Accessible Graduate Studies

Significant faculty member retirement is anticipated in the next decade.<sup>4</sup> To attend to a potential shortage, graduate studies will be key to generating qualified new faculty members. Between the labour market shift towards knowledge-based industries and predicted faculty shortages, there will be a need for more than 80,000 graduates from masters and PhD programs each year by 2011. However, the number of graduate degrees awarded annually in Canada has not increased since the mid 1990s, remaining steady at around 40,000 graduates.<sup>5</sup>

Time-to-completion, graduate student funding, and faculty member renewal have been identified as major priorities by organisations such as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies. The federal government has set goals to encourage and facilitate enrolment in graduate programs in order to foster university innovation and the dispersion of qualified researchers into the Canadian labour market. The Canadian Graduate Scholarships introduced in 2003 were a positive start to improving access to graduate studies. However, there are still large numbers of unfunded graduate students.

Furthermore, as tuition fees continue to soar in most graduate programs, the value of scholarships depreciates.

The federal government must restore transfer payments to the provinces to enable provincial governments and universities to reduce all tuition fees.

Reducing fees for graduate students in the post-residency phase would improve access and reduce student debt.

Furthermore, post-residency fees would play an important role in improving retention and time-to-completion in Canadian graduate programmes.

Table 1: Sample of Universities with Post-Residency Fee Systems (PRF)

University	Tuition Fees	Post-Residency Fees	Cost of 5-year PhD program today	Reduction
Simon Fraser	\$4,338	\$2,169	\$15,183	50%
Calgary	\$4,765	\$1,386	\$13,728	71%
Manitoba	\$4,177	\$674	\$10,376	84%

Table 2: Sample of Universities with No Post-Residency Fee System (PRF)

University	Cost of 5-year PhD program before PR Fees eliminated	Cost of 5-year PhD program today	Increase
Western Ontario	\$11,205	\$25,475	127%
Toronto	\$7,104	\$27,210	283%
Queen's	\$8,400	\$31,500	275%

## Endnotes

1. Canadian Association for Graduate Studies. October 2003. *The Completion of Graduate Studies in Canadian Universities: Report & recommendations*; Pyke, S.W. and P.M. Sheridan. 1993. "Logistic Regression of Graduate Student Retention", *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, Vol.23, No.2.
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4. Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. 2002. *Canada's Universities: A strong foundation for innovation*.
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6. Canada's Innovation Strategy: <http://innovation.gc.ca>