

Tuition fees for degree programs increase in 2020/2021

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Tuition fees for degree programs increased for both undergraduate and graduate students for the 2020/2021 academic year. While the fall 2020 term will see postsecondary institutions continue to offer online instruction in response to the pandemic, students will pay higher tuition fees on average compared with the previous academic year.

Tuition fees increase for Canadian undergraduate and graduate students

Nationally, students enrolled full-time in undergraduate programs will pay, on average, \$6,580 (**correction**) in 2020/2021, up 1.7% (**correction**) from the previous year. The average cost for graduate programs rose by 1.6% to \$7,304. To further explore 2020/2021 tuition fees, in a visual format, refer to "[Tuition fees for degree programs: Interactive tool](#)."

Average tuition fees reflect both the variety of degree programs offered by institutions and the share of students enrolled in these programs. As a result, even if there are no changes in specific program tuition fees, the average tuition could change if new programs are added or if the distribution of students across programs changes.

While research shows that the [earnings premium of having a postsecondary education](#) outweighs the cost of obtaining one, postsecondary students have immediate financial concerns which have been heightened by the pandemic. Results from a [recent crowdsourcing initiative](#) showed that about two-thirds (67%) of postsecondary student participants were highly concerned about having no job prospects in the near future as a result of the pandemic.

Faced with fewer job prospects, over three-quarters of returning students (77%) were very or extremely concerned about their finances. While the Canada Emergency Student Benefit reduced these concerns, even after the announcement, 46% of participants were worried about their ability to pay for tuition for the 2020 fall term.

Undergraduate tuition fees remained relatively stable in Ontario (+0.1%). In the other provinces and in Yukon, increases ranged from 1.9% in Prince Edward Island to 5.7% in Saskatchewan and 7.1% in Alberta. The increase in Saskatchewan was primarily attributable to the addition of a new tuition fee for veterinary medicine. In Alberta, the increase was the result of a change in policy, which enabled Alberta institutions to raise tuition by up to 7%.

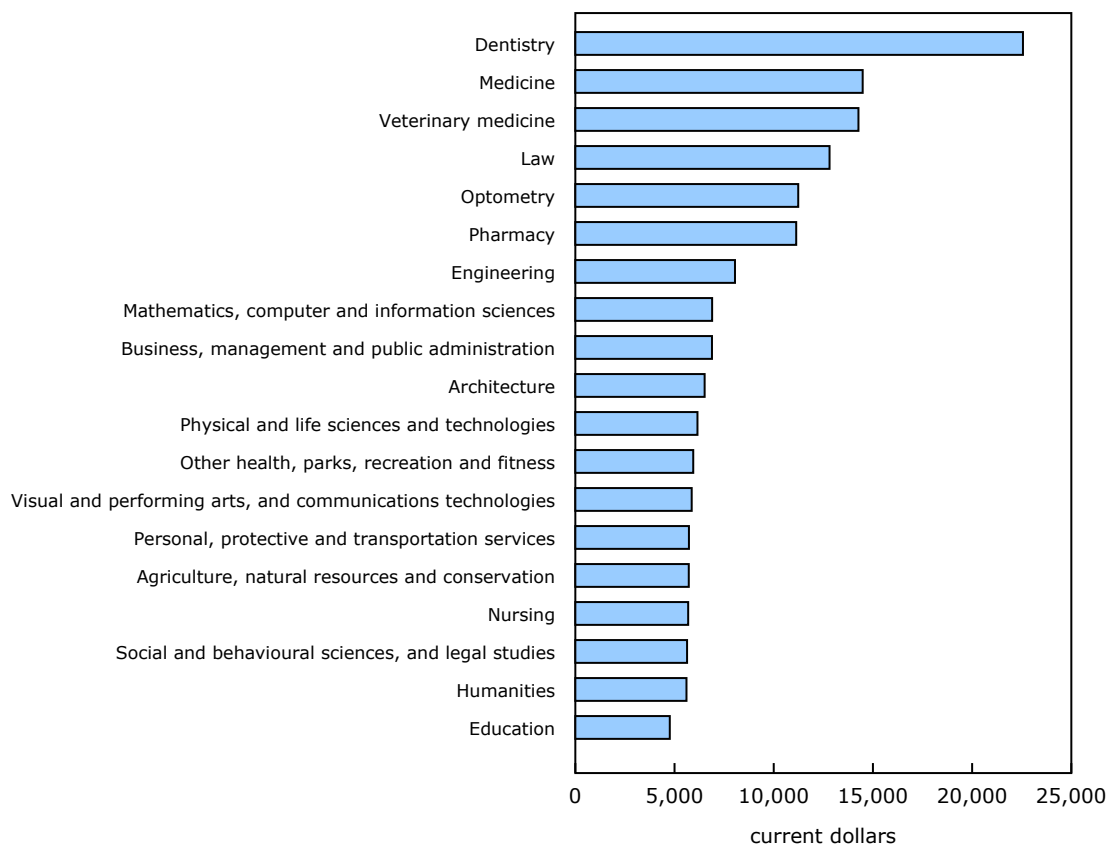
Graduate tuition fees for Canadian students were unchanged in Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan, and decreased by 0.4% in Alberta. The remaining seven provinces reported increases, ranging from 1.9% in Prince Edward Island to 5.3% in British Columbia.

The results of the Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs survey do not necessarily reflect the actual cost that students pay for their degree programs. Students may receive financial support, such as scholarships, bursaries, government grants and tax credits, which can vary across institutions and provinces. According to the 2018 National Graduate Survey, over half (56%) of students who graduated with a university degree had received such non-repayable financial support.



Highest average undergraduate tuition fees are in professional degree programs

Chart 1
Average undergraduate tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by field of study, 2020/2021 (correction)



Source(s): Table 37-10-0003-01.

The highest average tuition fees for Canadian undergraduate students in 2020/2021 were in the six professional degree programs: dentistry (\$22,562), medicine (\$14,483), veterinary medicine (\$14,270), law (\$12,813), optometry (\$11,235) and pharmacy (\$11,133).

These six programs accounted for 3.7% of all Canadian undergraduate student enrolments. Findings from the [Education and Labour Market Longitudinal Platform](#) revealed that graduates from these programs had the highest median employment income two years after graduating.

Four fields of study account for almost 60% of undergraduate student enrolments: social and behavioural sciences and legal studies (not including law); business, management and public administration; physical and life sciences and technologies; and the humanities.

In social and behavioural sciences and legal studies (not including law), the average undergraduate tuition fee for full-time Canadian students was \$5,632, with fees ranging from \$2,699 in Newfoundland and Labrador to \$7,686 in Nova Scotia.

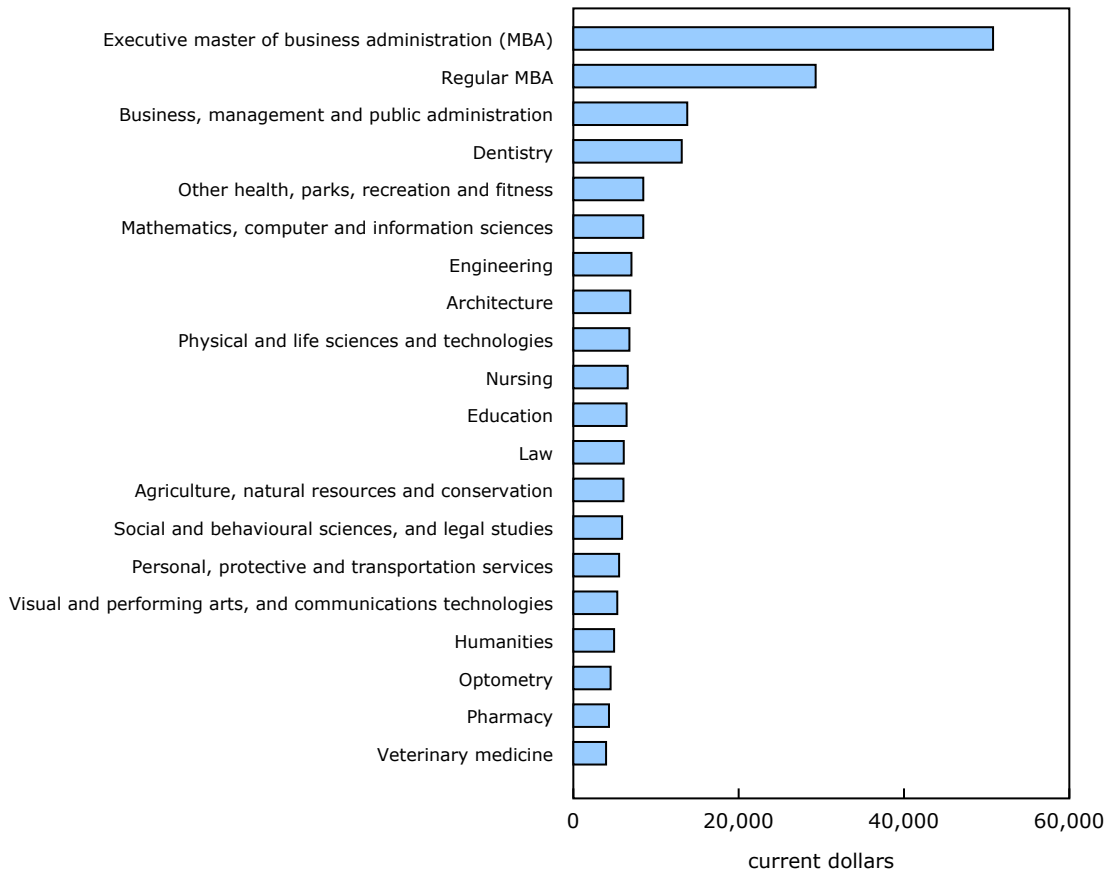
Undergraduate tuition fees in business, management and public administration averaged \$6,887. Newfoundland and Labrador (\$2,715) had the lowest fees, while Ontario (\$9,414) had the highest.

In physical and life sciences and technologies, undergraduate tuition fees were the lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador (\$2,687), while they were above the Canadian average (\$6,156) in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

Undergraduate tuition fees in the humanities averaged \$5,602, ranging from \$2,618 in Newfoundland and Labrador to \$7,542 in Nova Scotia.

Masters of business administration remain the most expensive graduate programs

Chart 2
Average graduate tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by field of study, 2020/2021



Source(s): Table 37-10-0004-01.

At the graduate level, the most expensive programs remained the executive and regular masters of business administration (MBA) programs.

Average tuition for an executive MBA was \$50,774 in 2020/2021, while the fee for a regular MBA averaged \$29,313. These averages at the national level reflect the broad range of fees among the provinces that offer these programs.

The average tuition fees for executive MBA programs, which are geared towards working professionals with significant managerial experience, ranged from \$13,807 in Quebec to \$91,674 in Ontario, while the average tuition fees for regular MBA programs ranged from \$2,610 in Newfoundland and Labrador to \$42,389 in Ontario.

Business, management and public administration (\$13,781) had the third highest average tuition fees for graduate programs nationally, followed by dentistry (\$13,114).

Tuition for graduate veterinary medicine decreased 5.0% at the national level due to a fee structuring change at the University of Calgary, which decreased the fees in Alberta by 38.1%.

Tuition fees for international students increase

The average tuition fees for international undergraduate students in Canada rose 7.1% to \$32,019 (**correction**) in 2020/2021. This increase is in line with the increase in the 2019/2020 academic year (+7.6%), prior to the pandemic.

Results from the [Financial Information of Universities and Colleges](#) Survey showed that tuition fees account for a growing share of revenues for universities, amounting to \$8.4 billion in 2017/2018. Key factors for the overall rise in the proportion of tuition revenues are rising tuition fees, and increased enrolment of international students, who pay higher tuition fees than domestic students.

The pandemic may reduce international student enrolments for the 2020/2021 academic year due to international travel restrictions or if international students choose not to continue their studies online. A forthcoming study will assess the financial impact of the pandemic on universities in Canada.

Two-thirds of international students were studying at the undergraduate level. Of this group, 28% were enrolled in business, management and public administration, with an average tuition fee of \$30,769.

Just over 13% of international undergraduate students were enrolled full-time in engineering, which had above-average tuition fees of \$36,072.

Very few international students (0.4%) were enrolled in professional degree programs, where the average tuition fees for international students were among the highest of all programs, ranging from \$36,001 for law to \$65,576 for veterinary medicine.

International undergraduate tuition fees did not increase in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the remaining nine provinces, tuition fee increases ranged from 0.1% in Saskatchewan to 25.2% (**correction**) in Alberta. The increases for Alberta resulted from a change in their international tuition model.

Average tuition fees for international students in graduate programs rose 7.3% to \$19,252 in 2020/2021. Graduate tuition fees for international students rose the most in Alberta (+30%) and were unchanged in Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan.

Additional compulsory fees decrease in five provinces as a result of the pandemic

Additional compulsory fees vary by institution and can change over time. These fees apply to all students, regardless of field of study. Typically, they include fees for athletics, student health services and student associations.

Nationally, additional compulsory fees for undergraduate students were, on average, \$945 in 2020/2021, up 2.5% from the previous year. For graduate students, average additional compulsory fees rose 2.6% to \$871 in 2020/2021.

While changes in additional compulsory fees varied across institutions, average fees increased in five provinces. On the other hand, in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, additional compulsory fees decreased for both undergraduates and graduates as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Decreases for undergraduates ranged from 0.9% in British Columbia to 24.9% in Saskatchewan. For graduates, the declines ranged from 1.2% in Prince Edward Island to 26.3% in Saskatchewan.

Additional compulsory fees also decreased in Yukon due to a fee restructuring approved before the pandemic.

Table 1
Percentage increase in average tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by province and level of study, 2020/2021 (correction)

	Undergraduate	Graduate
	annual % change	
Canada	1.7	1.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	2.1	0.0
Prince Edward Island	1.9	1.9
Nova Scotia	3.3	3.0
New Brunswick	3.1	3.5
Quebec	3.1	3.0
Ontario	0.1	0.7
Manitoba	4.6	3.5
Saskatchewan	5.7	0.0
Alberta	7.1	-0.4
British Columbia	2.0	5.3
Yukon	3.1	..

.. not available for a specific reference period

Source(s): Table 37-10-0045-01.

Table 2
Average undergraduate tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by field of study (correction)

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2019/2020 to 2020/2021
	current dollars		% change
Dentistry	22,242	22,562	1.4
Medicine	14,201	14,483	2.0
Veterinary medicine	7,852	14,270	81.7
Law	12,527	12,813	2.3
Optometry	11,203	11,235	0.3
Pharmacy	10,931	11,133	1.8
Engineering	7,949	8,047	1.2
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	6,814	6,895	1.2
Business, management and public administration	6,795	6,887	1.4
Total, field of study	6,468	6,580	1.7
Architecture	6,470	6,517	0.7
Physical and life sciences and technologies	6,068	6,156	1.5
Other health, parks, recreation and fitness	5,867	5,943	1.3
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	5,789	5,865	1.3
Personal, protective and transportation services	5,686	5,726	0.7
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	5,614	5,718	1.9
Nursing	5,583	5,688	1.9
Social and behavioural sciences, and legal studies	5,555	5,632	1.4
Humanities	5,486	5,602	2.1
Education	4,648	4,761	2.4

Source(s): Table 37-10-0003-01.

Table 3
Average undergraduate tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by province and selected field of study, 2020/2021

	Social and behavioural sciences, and legal studies	Business, management and public administration	Physical and life sciences and technologies	Humanities
	current dollars			
Canada	5,632	6,887	6,156	5,602
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,699	2,715	2,687	2,618
Prince Edward Island	6,390	6,390	6,390	6,390
Nova Scotia	7,686	8,315	8,305	7,542
New Brunswick	7,587	8,053	7,867	7,456
Quebec	3,226	3,133	3,483	4,240
Ontario	6,136	9,414	6,838	6,085
Manitoba	4,198	4,828	4,486	4,176
Saskatchewan	6,567	7,545	6,857	6,561
Alberta	5,733	6,075	5,681	5,435
British Columbia	5,496	5,834	5,413	5,267
Yukon	..	3,930

.. not available for a specific reference period

Source(s): Table 37-10-0003-01.

Table 4
Average graduate tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by field of study

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2019/2020 to 2020/2021
	current dollars		% change
Executive master of business administration (MBA)	50,459	50,774	0.6
Regular MBA	29,028	29,313	1.0
Business, management and public administration	13,145	13,781	4.8
Dentistry	13,002	13,114	0.9
Other health, parks, recreation and fitness	8,401	8,463	0.7
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	8,395	8,461	0.8
Total, field of study	7,186	7,304	1.6
Engineering	6,990	7,031	0.6
Architecture	6,742	6,890	2.2
Physical and life sciences and technologies	6,741	6,785	0.7
Nursing	6,328	6,580	4.0
Education	6,423	6,443	0.3
Law	6,036	6,101	1.1
Agriculture, natural resources and conservation	5,938	6,065	2.1
Social and behavioural sciences, and legal studies	5,801	5,901	1.7
Personal, protective and transportation services	5,513	5,538	0.5
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	5,263	5,316	1.0
Humanities	4,881	4,932	1.0
Optometry	4,508	4,508	0.0
Pharmacy	4,245	4,314	1.6
Veterinary medicine	4,170	3,961	-5.0

Source(s): Table 37-10-0004-01.

Note to readers

Data presented in this release are from the annual Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs (TLAC) survey. The survey covers all public degree-granting institutions (universities and colleges) in Canada; that is, institutions that offer programs leading to degrees as defined by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials: bachelor's degrees, applied (bachelor's) degrees, applied master's degrees, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. These degrees are more commonly offered by universities, but may also be offered by colleges. Canadian students, including Canadian citizens and permanent residents, are reported separately from international students.

The TLAC survey was administered from May to July 2020 and data cover the 2020/2021 academic year. Data for 2020/2021 are preliminary. Any required changes will be applied to the 2021/2022 data release, when the 2020/2021 data become final.

Although tuition fee increases are generally regulated by provincial policies, some programs may be exempt from these policies, resulting in possible rises that exceed provincial limits. Tuition fee averages may vary from year to year because of changes in the program structures and fees.

National and provincial tuition fee averages are weighted with 2017/2018 student enrolments using the Postsecondary Student Information System. If the number of enrolments for a given program is unknown, that program is excluded from the averages. The same student enrolment figures are used for weighting both academic years (2019/2020 and 2020/2021), thereby allowing for a comparison of changes in tuition fees.

Masters of business administration programs have been excluded from the national and provincial weighted averages to eliminate the effect of the high cost of these programs on the overall tuition fee averages. Dental, medical and veterinary residency programs offered in teaching hospitals and similar locations that may lead to advanced professional certification have also been excluded.

Because the distribution of enrolments across the various programs varies from period to period, caution must be exercised when making long-term historical comparisons.

Figures on enrolments are from the 2017/2018 Postsecondary Student Information System.

The fields of study are adapted from the 2016 Classification of Instructional Programs, Statistics Canada's standard for classifying instructional programs.

Data in this release do not take into account financial assistance or tax rebates provided to students.

Correction

The Tuition and Living Accommodation Costs survey data have been corrected for the reference years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, because of an error in data processing that affected one Alberta college. This error affects the average tuition fees for Alberta and Canada for Canadian and international undergraduate students. Two fields of study were affected: visual and performing arts, and communications technologies and other health, parks, recreation and fitness.

Available tables: [37-10-0003-01](#) to [37-10-0006-01](#) , [37-10-0045-01](#), [37-10-0046-01](#), [37-10-0120-01](#) and [37-10-0121-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3123](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).