

Tuition and fees consultation:

# WHAT WE HEARD

NOVEMBER 2023



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

**The university is committed to engaging in an annual comprehensive consultation process for tuition and fees. The 2023-24 process, developed in collaboration with the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Association, provided for meaningful, inclusive, and substantive consultation. Student feedback gathered throughout the process informed the development of the 2023-24 tuition and fee proposals.**

Central to the consultation process is the Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee (TFCC), the formal platform for discussing potential tuition fee adjustments and mandatory non-instructional fees (MNIFs). In addition to the TFCC meetings, additional key activities were built into the 2023-24 consultation plan to ensure all students had the opportunity to provide feedback and engage in the process. The purpose of this document is to share what we've heard through these engagements.

## 2023 Consultation Process

- **Tuition and Fee Consultation Committee (TFCC)**  
AUG. 31, OCT. 6, OCT. 26, NOV. 10
- **All-Student Email on Tuition and Fees**  
SEPT. 18
- **Student Tuition and Fees Survey**  
SEPT. 18-OCT. 26
- **Student Union Student Legislative Council**  
SEPT. 26; OCT. 31
- **Graduate Student Association Graduate Representative Council**  
SEPT. 26; OCT. 31
- **Faculty-Specific Discussions**  
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER
- **Student Community Discussion**  
OCT. 11

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## Consultation Themes

Several common themes emerged from the student feedback. These themes encompass a wide range of areas: value for fees; the impacts of tuition and fee increases on students; the ongoing need for equity, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility; student health and wellbeing; teaching and learning; and transparent communication between the university and its student body. We heard students asking for more comprehensive support, transparency, and affordability in various aspects of their university journey.

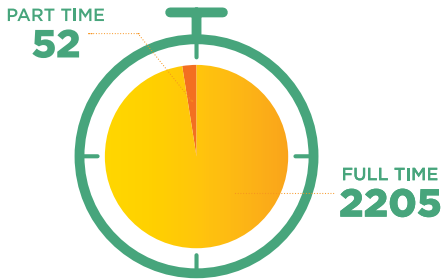
# TUITION AND FEES

## Survey results

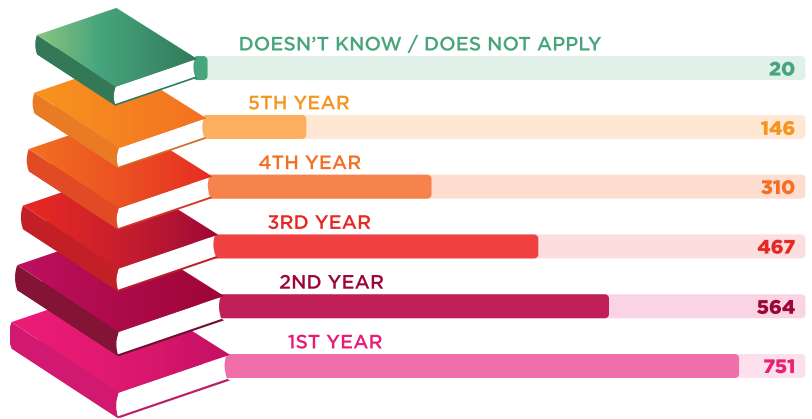
What degree program are you in?



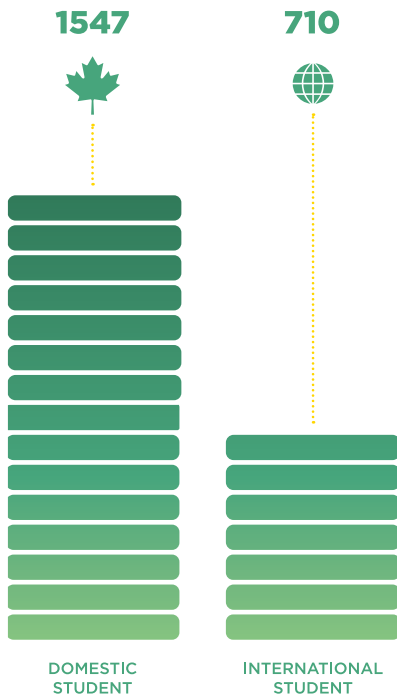
Which best describes your registration status?



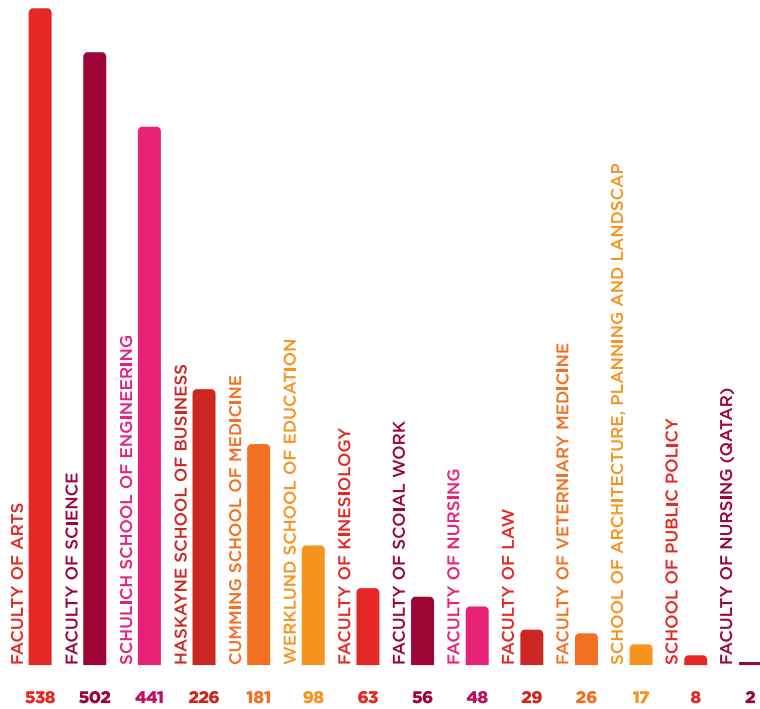
What is your year of study?



Are you a domestic or international student?



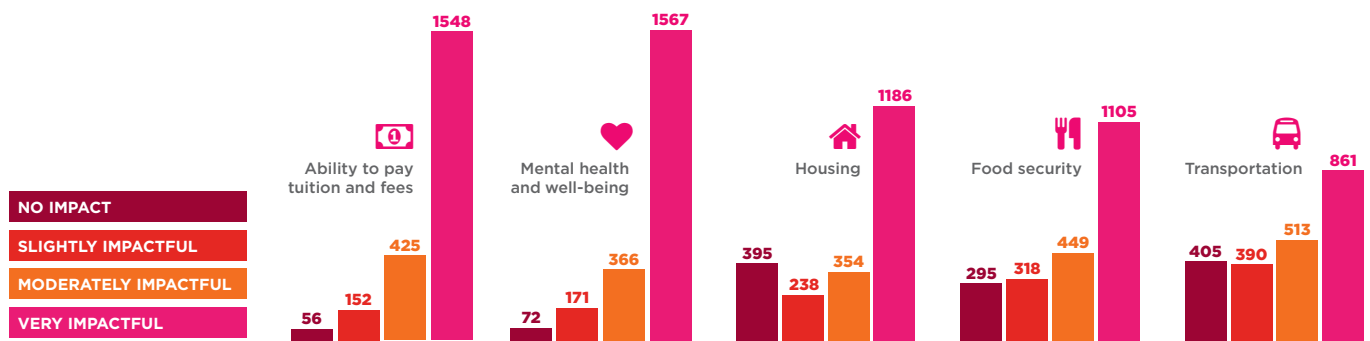
Please select the Faculty / School you are primarily associated with



# Tuition and Fee Proposal

## WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

**Tuition increases:** Through the tuition and fee consultation survey, students expressed concern regarding the proposed tuition and fee increases, with 90% indicating that the proposed increases would be moderately or very impactful on their ability to pay tuition and fees. 89% indicated that the proposed increases would be either moderately or very impactful to their mental health and well-being. Students noted the proposed increases would be also moderately or very impactful on housing (71%), food security (71%) and transportation (63%). Concerns were raised about the disproportionate impact that the proposed 10% tuition increases will have on international students and the compounding effect that annual tuition increases have had on affordability.



**Transparency on tuition and fees and institutional budget:** Students expressed a desire for additional information on the need for tuition increases and how tuition revenue fits into the overall institutional budget. There was strong support for university-level advocacy for increased government funding.

**International students:** In addition to concerns regarding international tuition, students expressed concern about the high use of the campus food bank by international students, especially graduate students, and that a 10% increase in tuition would only exacerbate this problem. There was concern for international students who did not finish within the standard length of program and the financial impact should they find themselves outside the international tuition guarantee window.

**Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIFs):** Students wanted to see more value for fees, wanted to explore making some fees optional based on affordability and emphasized the importance of transparency in how mandatory fees are used.

**Graduate students:** Graduate students shared concerns around the level of funding available, rising costs of living, disparities in funding across faculties, and issues related to international student funding. Students were concerned about the impact that restructuring of Graduate Program Administrators has had on students and that they are seeing a decreased amount of support while their tuition continues to increase.

**General affordability:** Concerns included increased food bank usage by students and the impact that large rent increases and low vacancy rates are having on students. Students noted the limited job opportunities available and the need for increased support to find internship and Work Integrated Learning experiences. They expressed concern for what was felt to be a declining value for goods and services while fees are going up (i.e. international student services, meal plan food quality) as well as the ongoing impact of increasing cost such as mandatory textbooks and supplies.

**Priority areas to focus resources:** Of the more than 2,300 students who responded to the student tuition and fees consultation survey, the top area indicated for resource investment that would enhance learning and the student experience was student financial supports, with 19% of respondents listing it as a priority. This was closely followed by investment in student supports (e.g., wellness, food security, student housing, international student advising) at 15%. Experiential and work integrated learning opportunities were the third highest with 11% of students indicating this as one of their top five priorities.

- 1 Student financial supports**
  - 2 Student supports** (e.g. wellness, food security, student housing, international student advising)
  - 3 Academic program improvements & innovation**
  - 4 Opportunities for students in experiential and work integrated learning**
  - 5 Classroom and learning space renovations and improvements**
- 6. Student academic advising supports
  - 7. Opportunities for academic faculty, staff and graduate students to advance teaching and learning innovation
  - 8. Digital infrastructure (e.g., information technology, learning technologies, cybersecurity and website improvements)
  - 9. Initiatives directed at equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism
  - 10. Initiatives related to campus sustainability (education and operations)
  - 11. Other
  - 12. Initiatives to advance Indigenous engagement, pedagogies and perspectives



## WHAT WE HEARD FROM STUDENT LEADERS

- Align domestic and international increases
- Increase “rate increase” transparency (why increases are needed)
- Establish an International Student Advisory Committee
- Establish a Community of Practice for Affordability
- Provide a five-year tuition outlook
- Freeze the athletics fee until benefit to students is demonstrated
- Freeze all MNIFs until reporting is more transparent
- Reduce rent increases to 1.0-5.0%
- Improve meal plan food quality
- Improve student advising supports (undergraduate and graduate)

## HOW YOUR FEEDBACK IS BEING USED

### Tuition increases

The university recognizes the impact that tuition and fee increases have on students. This understanding needs to be balanced with budget and inflationary pressure while ensuring that we can continue to deliver quality education and exceptional services to our student community. The Government of Alberta's tuition increase cap of 2% for domestic students is below the rate of inflation and below the rate of cost growth at the University of Calgary.

In response to concerns regarding the disproportional impact that the proposed increases would have on international students, especially given the external factors impacting overall cost of living/affordability, the proposed international student tuition increase has been reduced from the forecasted 10% to 6%. International students are currently provided with a tuition guarantee for the standard length of their program of study as is required by the Alberta tuition regulation. All retained tuition rate groups set to expire in winter 2024 will be extended for an additional year. This applies to both domestic and international students. These students will only experience the proposed 2%/6% increase but will not move to current (higher) tuition groups.

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### Understanding tuition fees and the overall institutional budget

Students identified a need for clear information on how tuition revenue fits into the overall institutional budget and expressed a desire to understand more about the budget context at the University of Calgary. In fall 2023, we launched a Tuition and Fees website that included information on how tuition and fees are set at the University of Calgary, proposed tuition and fee increases, the student consultation process and resources to help students better understand the university's funding model. In addition, supplemental budget information was shared during our consultation sessions.

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### International student services

We recognize that there is a growing need for improvements to international student services. To address these areas and determine where enhancements are required, at the request of the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Association, we will be forming an International Student Advisory Group made up of student leaders, international students, and staff. Their collaborative efforts will help us identify opportunities for improvement and create a more supportive environment for our international student community. We're committed to enhancing the overall experience of our international students and providing the support necessary to succeed during their time at the University of Calgary.

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### Graduate student financial support

Graduate students have raised concerns about stagnant rates for academic employment and the need for increased minimum stipends for thesis-based students. Graduate student funding is a key priority in Ahead of Tomorrow as well as our upcoming Academic Innovation Plan and we'll be working to share details on how we'll action these ambitious targets in the coming months.

We also acknowledge the importance of revisiting the Graduate Student Minimum Funding Operating Standing. In the 2023-24 academic year, the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) will conduct a thorough review to better understand the financial challenges graduate students face and seek solutions to provide additional financial support.

## **Advising support**

We recognize the need to review undergraduate advising systems and models. In collaboration with our faculties, we're actively working to ensure that advising services are comprehensive and responsive to student needs. Our goal is to provide the necessary support and guidance to help you navigate your academic journey successfully.

This includes addressing gaps in Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) support within departments and faculties. Collaborative efforts involving FGS, Teaching Faculties, and relevant stakeholders will lead to improved support structures for graduate students.

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## **Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIFs)**

In response to concerns regarding the value and benefit that students receive from the goods and services that MNIFs support, the university is committed to taking steps to enhance the value offered by these fees, particularly in areas like Dinos athletics. This includes providing free tickets to playoff games starting in 2023-24. Additionally, we'll be hosting focus groups with students and athletes in the coming months to identify additional ways to maximize value and communicate the benefits to students. Furthermore, we're committed to working closely with student leaders to ensure that the reporting on MNIFs is not only meaningful but also user-friendly. In fall 2023, a companion document for MNIF reports will be created to facilitate better understanding and transparency from students.

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## **Ancillary Services: Residence and meal plans**

Our commitment is to provide affordable and high-quality housing and dining options, and we will continue to work to enhance the value and quality of these services based on student feedback and evolving needs. Based on earlier student feedback, the proposed rate for Varsity Courts has been reduced from 7% to a 4% increase. For UCalgary's other residences, the proposed average increase of 4.8% remains below the rental market rate increases observed in Calgary over the past year. This increase will address rising operational costs and is an essential part of our plan to sustain and improve our residence buildings.

An operational plan was implemented in September in response to student feedback surrounding increased meal plan quality. This is an ongoing process, and we will continue to gather student feedback through surveys to ensure meal plans meet students' expectations and needs.

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## **General affordability**

We agree that affordability is an important issue across Canadian post-secondary institutions. We're committed to hearing from students about how affordability challenges impact their academic experience throughout the year, not just as part of tuition consultation. We'll be creating an Advisory Group on Affordability, including student leaders and staff to share information, discuss issues and make recommendations on how the institution support students dealing with these important issues.

## Other Themes

Throughout our consultation process, students had opportunities to provide feedback on a range of topics related to their overall student experience at the University of Calgary. While these areas do not directly link to the tuition and fee proposal, we have included below the main themes that were shared.

### WHAT WE HEARD: ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND WELLBEING

- 1. Accessibility on campus:** Students are concerned about the lack of accessibility on campus, including issues with infrastructure maintenance and snow removal; lack of accessible desks and seating in classes; and non-functional elevators. Students felt information about accessibility is hard to find.
- 2. Access to mental health and wellness services:** Students are concerned about staffing levels and waitlists for counseling, and the need for more knowledge about available services. They also mentioned cultural and family barriers to seeking help.
- 3. Inclusive and welcoming spaces:** Students emphasized the need for inclusivity, diversity and respect in classrooms and on campus in general.
- 4. Infrastructure:** Students highlighted the need for practical campus furnishings, capital improvements in older buildings and better maintenance. They also emphasized the importance of access to Wi-Fi and sufficient study spaces.
- 5. Student advising support:** Students expressed a need for better access to undergraduate advising support.
- 6. Campus life:** Students want clarity on student athlete accommodation, promotion of student athletics and more community-building efforts.

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### WHAT WE HEARD: TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 1. Academic programs:** Students are looking for innovative programs and curricular improvements and opportunities for experiential and work integrated learning.
- 2. Classroom experience:** Students mentioned the quality of teaching and learning, with a desire for more consistency, interaction and engagement. They also want smaller class sizes and more research opportunities.
- 3. Access to classes:** Concerns were raised about the availability of classes, particularly those needed for graduation.
- 4. Access to resources:** Students want accessible and inclusive course materials, and expansion of resources for faculty members to support continuing quality improvements in teaching and learning.
- 5. General teaching and learning feedback:** Suggestions included innovation in program design, focusing on careers, diverse and inclusive teaching environments, continuous assessment of teaching, and acknowledgment of student contributions.



## HOW THIS FEEDBACK IS BEING USED

This feedback has been provided to each individual unit and will be part of ongoing discussions with our student leaders. In many cases, work related to these themes is already underway across campus. A few highlights include:

1. The [Presidential Task Force on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility](#) which is focused on creating a more inclusive and welcoming campus environment for all students and promoting diversity and accessibility throughout our academic and non-academic programs.
2. The university has committed to ongoing investments in classroom improvements, with a specific focus on identifying areas where enhancements are needed. The [Learning Spaces Committee](#) is actively examining classroom spaces to identify classrooms in need of updates to create an environment that fosters better teaching and learning experiences.
3. In the draft [Academic Innovation Plan](#), we are working to provide more opportunities for transdisciplinary and experiential learning as well as entrepreneurial thinking, research and creative scholarship within courses and programs. These priorities are at the forefront of Ahead of Tomorrow.
4. The Plan also proposes a Digital Learning Strategy for the University of Calgary that includes the platforms, technologies, professional learning opportunities and resources needed for academic staff to offer high-quality online learning across the institution. Furthermore, the feedback provided by students will help to broadly inform actions and initiatives as we address the teaching and learning strategy in Ahead of Tomorrow as well as the academic priorities outlined throughout the document.

## Conclusion

Thank you to our students who took time to engage in the tuition and fee consultation process over the past two months. Students are at the heart of the mandate and work of the University of Calgary, and we are committed to engaging in a comprehensive consultation process to ensure that student input is considered and meaningfully addressed in the development of tuition and fee proposals.

From feedback provided through the Tuition and Fees Consultation Survey, the student community roundtable discussion, faculty-led sessions, meetings with the Student Legislative Council and Graduate Representative Council, and the Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee, the consultation was substantive and inclusive and informed and influenced the recommendations being put forward for consideration. Thank you to the Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association for their collaboration in building the revised consultation process that will also be used as the benchmark in the years ahead.