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# Canada's universities' commitments to Canadians

October 2015



We live in a world where economic, social and personal fulfillment depends less upon what we know, and more upon what we are able to learn, how we think and the degree to which we are able to respond to change around us. As centres of learning and discovery, universities play a crucial role in this process. Universities transform the lives of people, who in turn transform our communities, our country and the world.

At their core, universities exist to enrich the world through learning and advancing knowledge. To do this, Canada's universities continuously embrace change and innovate. They respond to the shifting needs of society while holding true to the enduring values upon which they were founded.

Learning is at the heart of the university mission to pursue truth, educate students, and generate and disseminate knowledge. A university is a vibrant community of highly diverse, independent learners who inspire, motivate and empower learning through sharing. The mutual respect and equity with which all students, faculty and community members are treated creates a dynamic learning and research environment.

The ability to learn depends upon the freedom to explore, question and challenge. With evidence and truth as guiding principles, this freedom is fundamental to the role of universities in a democratic society. It is, in essence, a social contract. Along with the freedom to explore and interrogate, universities have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of society. They must work to create knowledge that is the product of reasoned discourse, rigorous and extensive research and scholarship, and peer review. The unique freedoms that professors and researchers enjoy also carry responsibilities, and warrant an extraordinary degree of openness, accountability and transparency — not only in individual research endeavours, but in the operation of institutions as well.

We see the outcomes of the university mission most significantly in our graduates — their contributions to society, commitment to lifelong learning and engaged citizenship. Universities improve the quality of life of all Canadians through economic, social and cultural innovation, and drive prosperity by enhancing the competitiveness of the private sector. Canada's universities help people and communities realize a better future.

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## Canada's universities' commitments to Canadians

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### **1. To equip all students with the skills and knowledge they need to flourish in work and life, empowering them to contribute to Canada's economic, social and intellectual success.**

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Canada's future will be shaped by the educational experiences of today's students. Universities commit to improving accessibility to higher education for all Canadians. We will work with partners to address barriers to access and support student success at university.

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### **2. To pursue excellence in all aspects of learning, discovery and community engagement.**

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Universities are founded on a commitment to excellence. Canada's universities will continue to nurture and support world-leading research, innovate how we learn, and generate new knowledge by mobilizing the brightest minds, key partners and resources to meet society's evolving needs.

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### **3. To deliver a broad range of enriched learning experiences.**

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Canada's universities will nurture and support excellence in teaching. We will work with our partners in the private sector and governments to increase experiential learning and enhance international and Canadian mobility opportunities. Universities will continually strengthen connections with our broader society to ensure that higher education meets the evolving needs of students, the labour market and our communities.

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### **4. To put our best minds to the most pressing problems — whether global, national, regional or local.**

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We will continue to pursue and support ground-breaking research for the benefit of Canada and the world. Universities will develop new knowledge that addresses pressing challenges in a world of increasing complexity. We will build and strengthen an environment in which innovation and curiosity thrive.

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### **5. To help build a stronger Canada through collaboration and partnerships with the private sector, communities, government and other educational institutions in Canada and around the world.**

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Universities serve as connectors and catalysts, bringing together ideas and resources from the private sector, government, colleges and community organizations. We will continue to invite collaboration and encourage a culture of innovation for the betterment of our economy and society.