

Senate Question Period
30th April, 2013

Question from Senator Fachinger:

Why does Queen's not invest in recruiting international graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences?

Background:

Most of the Humanities and Social Science graduate programs at Queen's cannot afford to recruit international students. The token presence of one or two international students in any of these programs seems to undermine the university's efforts to internationalize its campus. Apart from the fact that international graduate students enrich the quality and the culture of graduate programs, the presence of international students on campus is a significant component of internationalization at home as it has been promoted by QUIC and by the Academic Plan. In my capacity as an external reviewer of the undergraduate program in Modern Languages and Literatures at a research-intensive Ontario university, I have just learned that approximately 60% of the graduate students in both the Department's Spanish and Comparative Literature programs are international students. This university offers a subsidy for international PhD students up to a certain number per Faculty. Its funding of international graduate students comes almost exclusively from central flow. In contrast, Queen's graduate programs in German, Spanish, and now also in French have been closed mainly because of their alleged inability to attract domestic students.

Provost's Response:

In recent years, Queen's has invested in international graduate students through targeted support from internal sources and funding partnerships with agencies that provide financial support to students who come to Queen's from other countries. As a result, international enrolment has almost doubled since 2006, and international students now account for almost 20 percent of total graduate enrolment. (By Faculty, the proportion is highest in Engineering and Applied Science and lowest in Health Sciences.) A total of 260 ITAs are allocated to departments/programs in proportion to international demand and total domestic enrolment. The link to domestic enrolment is important because it is the revenues associated with reaching our domestic target that fund the international initiatives described.

Many internal and external factors are considered before a decision is made to suspend program admissions. For example, the Department of French Studies requested a suspension of admissions to its graduate program in light of a 60 percent reduction in applications since 2008, together with a decline from 50 percent to 20 percent in the proportion of total applications received from international students. This temporary suspension is intended to provide French Studies with the time it needs to restructure its program to meet the needs of prospective students.