

Expert Panel on Post-Secondary Institution Funding and Alberta's Competitiveness

Final Report and Recommendations

In December 2024, the Expert Panel on Post-Secondary Institution Funding and Alberta's Competitiveness was appointed to review and evaluate provincial funding for public post-secondary institutions and Independent Academic Institutions. Its task was to review funding models for higher education and assess Alberta's ability to compete on a global level with excellence in education.

The panel examined post-secondary institution funding mechanisms, federal immigration policy impacts on Alberta's post-secondary institutions, costs of administrative and regulatory burdens, and the overall competitiveness of Alberta's post-secondary system. The Panel engaged with representatives from 26 post-secondary institutions, faculty associations, student associations, and industry organizations as part of their review.

The panel's [final report and recommendations](#) were submitted to the Minister of Advanced Education in August 2025.

Recommendations

On a new funding framework

RECOMMENDATION 1: The provincial government should replace its current funding approach with a new funding framework with the following three components:

- An enrolment driven component which takes into account enrolment, cost of programs, market demand and government priorities. Based on those factors, each post-secondary program would be placed in a "cluster" that determines the payment provided to the institution for each enrolled student.
- A performance component which recognizes and rewards outcomes achieved by post-secondary institutions in three categories:
 - teaching and student experience
 - research
 - community impact
- A base funding component which addresses the costs of staffing, administration, facilities, information technology, services for students, research coordination, and other related costs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: In addition to the new funding framework, the government should introduce targeted, time-limited funding initiatives in three priority areas:

- attracting top research talent
- supporting innovation and developing technology
- providing incentives and support for collaboration among institutions

RECOMMENDATION 3: Apprenticeships should continue to be a priority for provincial funding as part of the funding framework.

- The base grant for apprenticeship funding provided to institutions should reflect overhead costs.
- Performance should also be evaluated resulting in additional funding to institutions providing apprenticeship programs.
- Enrolment should be funded as currently done with the apprenticeship learning grant but placed in a cluster reflecting both its high cost and provincial priority.
- The earliest possible commitment to the number of funded spaces for the coming year should be provided to post-secondary institutions offering apprenticeship programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Major IT replacements and new systems that are long-term investments should be funded accordingly rather than through ongoing base operating funding. Funding for deferred maintenance should be allocated on a three-year basis, acknowledging that adjustments may be made in the second and third years depending on annual provincial budget decisions.

On tuition

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Panel recommends that the current 2 per cent cap on all annual tuition fee increases be replaced with a new approach that would provide certainty to students for the duration of their programs but also allow institutions to adjust tuition annually for incoming first year students. Under this approach:

- First year students would be guaranteed that their tuition would not increase by more than 2 per cent per year for the duration of their program.
- Advanced Education should set the maximum allowable tuition for each of the clusters developed under Recommendation 1 and review the maximum rate regularly based on enrolment demands, cost of the programs, market demand and government priorities.
- Each year, institutions would have the autonomy to set the tuition rate for new, first year students, up to the maximum amount for each cluster set by Advanced Education.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The provincial government should provide more assistance to students in the form of non-repayable assistance rather than increasing the amount of assistance students are required to take on in loans.

On international students

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Panel recommends that, in relation to international students:

- The provincial government should continue to work with other provinces to advocate and influence regulations set by the federal government and ensure qualified international students continue to be welcomed at Alberta's post-secondary institutions.
- The provincial government and post-secondary institutions should continue to explore ways of promoting Alberta's outstanding post-secondary programs with various countries and international students to address the reputational impacts of the federal government's policies and continue to attract top talent to Alberta.

On governance, institutional autonomy and reducing red tape

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Panel recommends that the government review the range of institutional controls currently in place with a view to providing significantly more flexibility and more autonomy in relation to raising other revenue and reducing costs.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The government should explore ways of reducing the amount of red tape and administrative burden on post-secondary institutions by:

- Reducing the number and frequency of reporting requirements from Advanced Education to only those that are necessary for planning and accountability purposes, including performance metrics identified in the performance component of the new funding framework.
- Coordinating a review of regulatory requirements from ministries in addition to Advanced Education with a view to reducing the combined volume of reporting requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The government should streamline and speed up the process for approving new programs, especially those with high demand in the marketplace.

On institutional neutrality and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives

RECOMMENDATION 11: The government should expect all public post-secondary institutions to adhere to the principle of institutional neutrality; to refrain from policies and practices that are contrary to the equality of individuals and freedom from discrimination provisions in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, and to uphold and protect freedom of expression and intellectual diversity.