

ab●GPAC



To Minister Nicolaidis,

In recent weeks Albertans have experienced unprecedented upheavals in their employment, education, and in their daily lives generally, due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

All levels of government, as well as our post-secondary institutions, have moved quickly to protect the health and safety of workers, students, and members of the public. Important measures such as pausing student loan repayments, introducing emergency benefit programs, and suspending eviction enforcement, will protect students and recent graduates, as well as other vulnerable Albertans, in these uncertain times.

The Government of Alberta has also taken important and proactive steps to begin securing our province's economic recovery, following this global pandemic. For students and recent graduates to contribute fully to Alberta's economic recovery, additional action is needed.

We request that:

**1. the Government of Alberta coordinate with the federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit to develop an appropriate relief program for post-secondary students.**

Many post-secondary students will not be eligible for the CERB, or for Employment Insurance. Without additional measures to fill these gaps, many vulnerable Albertans could be left without support in these difficult times.

**2. the Government of Alberta provide additional direction to post-secondary institutions, on mitigating COVID-19 response measures' academic impacts on students.**

While protecting student and staff health and safety, and complying with public health measures, institutions should be guided by the following principles (in no particular order):

- Academic disadvantages arising from institutions' COVID-19 responses, such as suspending in-person classes, should be reduced as much as feasible (or ideally eliminated).
- Extenuating circumstances, such as students facing limited access to online learning technologies and the unique challenges being faced by international students, should be given adequate consideration and special accommodation.

- Students should be provided with as much flexibility as possible in completing academic requirements. This includes providing students with the ability to opt-in or -out, as applicable, to certain accommodations.

**3. the Government of Alberta, in collaboration with post-secondary institutions, explore creating a tuition and fees rebate program for students who must take additional time to complete their studies due to COVID-19.**

Alberta's post-secondary students are experiencing substantial disruptions to their studies. In many cases, students are unable to fulfil academic requirements such as apprenticeships, capstone projects, and practicums. Though some programs, and related professional organizations (as applicable), may decide to waive or adjust requirements, this is unlikely to occur in all cases. If students must extend their studies due to COVID-19, options to defray these unexpected costs should be explored.

We remain committed to working with the provincial government during these difficult times, and look forward to opportunities to discuss any of these proposed measures in detail.

Sincerely,

Alberta Graduate Provincial  
Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC)

Alberta Students' Executive  
Council (ASEC)

Council of Alberta University  
Students (CAUS)

Athabasca University Students'  
Union (AUSU)

*ab-GPAC, ASEC, CAUS, and AUSU collectively represent over 250,000 university, college, and polytechnic students across Alberta.*