



POLICY 9.01

POSITION POLICY

Tuition and Fees

POLICY INTENT

To outline the position of AUSU regarding tuition and fees for distance-delivery programming.

POLICY RESEARCH

The Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education has made a commitment to tuition that is both accessible and affordable.¹ As Athabasca University (AU) is similarly committed to the removal of barriers that restrict access to university level study,² AUSU Council supports changes to regulations regarding out-of-province learners.

The out-of-province distance-delivery programming fee is exempt from the Tuition Fee Regulation portion of the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA),³ and approximately two-thirds of Athabasca University undergraduate students participate in distance-delivery programming from outside of Alberta.⁴ Changes to the PSLA, limit tuition increases for Alberta-based students to a maximum increase equal to the Alberta all-goods Consumer Price Index following three increases of a maximum of 7% within three years from 2020 to 2023. Since the majority of AU students are out-of-province, they are not limited to the CPI limit; they have seen heavy increases alongside Alberta students and will face potential tuition increases when Alberta students will see inflationary increases. Other changes require international student tuition increases to be predictable throughout a standard four-year degree program, although they too have seen steep increases at Alberta institutions.⁵ AUSU Council believes all students should have a level of predictability to their tuition.

Athabasca University remains the only Alberta institution that charges different tuition rates for Canadians who reside outside of Alberta. In Canada, only Athabasca University and universities in Quebec charge more for students out-of-province.⁶ The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of mobility to all Canadian citizens and while specific exemptions are made for the provision of public services that include education, it is important to note many public services are provided to any Canadian citizen, regardless of their province of residence without onerous fees or extra charges.⁷

Be it resolved that the Athabasca University Students' Union supports tuition predictability and affordability for all students, including out-of-province distance students in the Tuition Fees Regulation of the Post-Secondary Learning Act.

Be it further resolved that the Athabasca University Students' Union oppose increases to tuition that exceed the Alberta CPI without proper consultation and approval of the affected students through their student council.

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- ¹ Government of Alberta. (2019, 01 14). *Affordable Tuition*. Retrieved from Alberta.ca:
<https://www.alberta.ca/affordable-tuition.aspx>
- ² Athabasca University. (2019, 01 14). *Mission & Mandate*. Retrieved from AthabascaU.ca:
<https://www.athabascau.ca/aboutau/mission/>
- ³ Government of Alberta. (2019, 01 14). *Documents/regs/2006/73*. Retrieved from qp.alberta.ca:
http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2006_273.pdf
- ⁴ Athabasca University. (2019, 01 14). *About AU*. Retrieved from athabascau.ca:
<https://www.athabascau.ca/aboutau/media/aufacts/>
- ⁵ Government of Alberta. *Budget 2019: A Plan for Jobs and the Economy*. Retrieved June 13, 2020 from
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/budget-2019-a-plan-for-jobs-and-the-economy>.
- ⁶ Post-Graduate Students' Society of McGill University. (2017) *PGSS Tuition Policy Briefing Paper*, p. 43.
- ⁷ Post-Graduate Students' Society of McGill University. (2017) *PGSS Tuition Policy Briefing Paper*, p. 16.