

University Tuition & Other Student Fees

FIVE FAST FACTS

1. In 2012/13, university system revenues exceeded \$1.2 billion, with at least 40% of the total from student fees and just over 34% from provincial grants.
2. In 2013/14, Nova Scotia had the 3rd highest domestic undergraduate tuition (\$5,554) and the 2nd highest graduate student tuition (\$5,966).
3. Also in 2013/14, international student tuition was 8th highest in Canada for undergraduates (\$13,627) and 2nd highest for graduate students (\$14,651).
4. Annual tuition growth for domestic undergraduate students is currently capped at 3%. Tuition growth is not regulated for international students or for students of professional post-graduate programs.
5. Student debt levels for Nova Scotia university graduates are decreasing. In 2010, the average graduate held \$30,200 in debt – which was almost \$2,500 lower than in 2005 (in 2010 dollars).

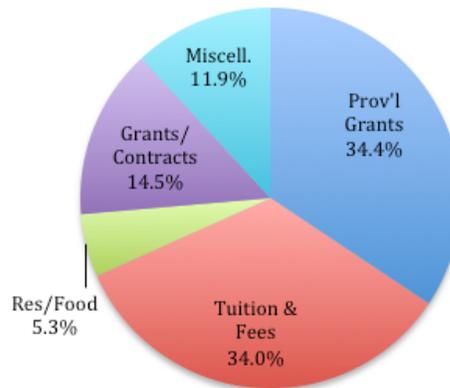
STUDENT FEES and GOVERNMENT FUNDING

In 2011/12, mandatory academic fees paid by students – including tuition, program and course-related fees, and book purchases – represented 34% of university system revenue, which was just shy of the Province’s grants to universities (34.4%). When residence fees and food services charges are included, students accounted for nearly 40% (see Chart 1).¹

Government has been gradually downloading a larger university funding burden onto students for decades.

- i. Tuition’s share of operating revenue nearly tripled in Nova Scotia from 1981 to 2011 – from 15% to 39% of total revenues.
- ii. Meanwhile, total government funding – including provincial operating and federal research grants – has fallen from 84% to 55% of total revenues.²
- iii. Since 1985, average Arts faculty tuition fees have grown by 223%. By comparison, cost of living has increase by 93% over the same period.

Figure 1. Share of University System Funding, by Source



STUDENT FEES POLICIES

Domestic Tuition (Nova Scotian and Canadian)

Beginning in 2005/06, tuition & fees policies in Nova Scotia have been subject to limitations set out in multi-year Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between the Province and all 10 universities. Table 1 summarizes the tuition growth caps imposed by the Province in each year since 2005, as well as the corresponding changes in provincial operating funding.

Table 1. Annual Tuition Caps and Operating Grants

Academic Year	Tuition Cap % (for domestic undergraduates)	Provincial Funding	
		\$mill	%Chg
2004-05	-	\$212	-
2005-06	3.9	\$224	5.7
2006-07	3.9	\$236	5.4
2007-08	3.9	\$259	9.7
2008-09	0	\$289	11.6
2009-10	0	\$317	9.7
2010-11	0	\$348	9.8
2011-12	3.0	\$335	-3.7
2012-13	3.0	\$324	-3.3
2013-14	3.0	\$314	-3.1
2014-15	3.0	\$317	1.0

Other important tuition policy changes include:

- i. In 2006, one-time tuition reduction of up to \$440 for all Nova Scotians studying in province;
- ii. In 2008, introduction of the Nova Scotia Student Bursary (NS-SB) for Nova Scotians studying in province (now valued at \$1,263/year); and
- iii. In 2010, addition of the Out-of-Province Student Bursary (OOP-SB) for other Canadians studying in Province (valued at \$261/year).

These various measures have helped to blunt the impact of tuition growth but the overall direction of tuition fees remains troubling. The current 3% growth cap still allows tuition costs to rise faster than annual inflation (~2%), which typically exceeds growth in real wages and student financial assistance (SFA).

As of 2013/14, Nova Scotia has the third highest average undergraduate tuition the and second highest graduate tuition in Canada (Table 2).³

Table 2. Average Tuition and Provincial Ranking (out of 10)

	Tuition (\$ Average)	Provincial Ranking
Domestic		
Undergraduate	\$5,554	3rd
Graduate	\$5,966	2nd
International		
Undergraduate	\$13,627	8th
Graduate	\$14,651	2nd

International Tuition

Of course, international students in Nova Scotia also pay differential tuition that is significantly higher than domestic student tuition.⁴ The differential is meant to cover government's part in funding post-secondary, since international students and their families have not previously paid taxes in Canada. In addition, current tuition caps do not protect international students; in 2012-13 their tuition grew by nearly 4% (See international students factsheet).⁵

Other Student Fees

Along with tuition, universities charge students a number of other fees for goods and services related to the delivery of education. These include:

- i. Residence and meal plan fees, which are not compulsory for all students;
- ii. Standard ancillary fees that are compulsory for all students (e.g. athletics, student union, technology and facility/infrastructure fees);

- iii. Program-specific Auxiliary Fees that function like ancillary fees for a subset of students (e.g. Dalhousie's proposed fee for the new architecture building); and
- iv. Course-specific Auxiliary Fees (e.g. laboratory, field trip, computer program or course material fees).

The MOU agreement aims to ensure that ancillary fee increases are not used to circumvent the tuition cap. Unfortunately, the language of the MOU serves only as a guideline for university behaviour: it leaves final authority for fee increases with universities and fails to define consequences for institutions that do not respect the spirit of the MOU agreement. Students have good reasons to be concerned about this situation. Universities have mostly respected the MOU but there are notable and troubling exceptions.⁶

- In 2012-13, NSCAD introduced a number of new ancillary fees that circumvent the tuition cap and together will total approximately \$200 per student in an average year.⁷
- The University of King's College approved a new \$180 ancillary fee, to begin in 2015, to fund a new athletics facility at Dalhousie University. Students voted against the proposal in a referendum.⁸
- SMU proposed a \$15 to \$20 per course fee intended to fund new athletics facilities without appropriate student consultation.

StudentsNS has called for a number of changes,⁹ which would clarify and strengthen the MOU language, strictly limit growth in all existing fees, and create formal student approval processes for the introduction of new fees (similar to an existing process used in Ontario). StudentsNS members are boycotting future information sessions on new fee proposals until the MOU language is clarified.¹⁰

¹ StudentsNS, 2013.

² CAUT, 2013.

³ Statistics Canada, 2012.

⁴ MPHEC, 2012.

⁵ MPHEC, 2012.

⁶ For details see StudentsNS, 2013a, pp. XX-XX.

⁷ See MPHEC, 2012 and Willick 2012.

⁸ See Ketterling, 2012.

⁹ See StudentsNS, 2013a, pp. XX-XX.

¹⁰ See OUSA, 2011.

¹¹ See StudentsNS, 2013b.