



ACUFC

ASSOCIATION DES COLLÈGES ET UNIVERSITÉS
DE LA FRANCOPHONIE CANADIENNE

Submission to the
Standing Committee on Science and Research

By
**The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie
canadienne (ACUFC)**

As part of its study on
Research and Scientific Publications in French

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1. The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne

The Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC) is a network of 22 francophone and bilingual post-secondary institutions in parts of Canada where francophones are the minority. Its mandate is to represent the collective interests of its members to the federal government for the purpose of improving access to post-secondary education in French.

Research and publications in French are among the ACUFC's priority areas of action. The Association has connections with federal research granting agencies to raise awareness about the challenges of conducting research in French outside of Quebec. In the recent Cross-Canada Official Languages Consultations conducted by Canadian Heritage, the ACUFC ensured that research is taken into account. It also oversees the Réseau de la recherche sur la francophonie canadienne, which organizes an annual scientific symposium and several knowledge mobilization activities.

2. Research conducted in French in Canadian francophone institutions

In the past year, ACUFC also led the National Dialogue on Postsecondary Education in a Francophone Minority Context (National Dialogue), a major pan-Canadian consultation that ran from June 2021 to March 2022. The process involved taking stock of post-secondary education in francophone minority communities in Canada and to find coherent, systemic and long-lasting solutions to ensure its survival. The final report, *Bâtir ensemble le postsecondaire en français de l'avenir* (Shaping the future of French postsecondary education together), was released on October 27, 2022. There is an entire chapter on research and scientific publications in French.¹ Three main findings on French language research emerged from the process.

First, researchers at our institutions work at the periphery of the major research networks. Teaching loads are heavy, graduate students are few, colleagues working in French on similar topics are far away, and English-speaking colleagues do not always understand the subject

¹ The full report is available at <https://egpostsecondaire.ca/documentation/>. The chapter on research can be found on pages 64 to 74. A summary and an infographic, in English and French, are also available on that webpage.

matter. This limits opportunities for scientific collaboration and interaction, just when they would be most helpful.

Second, English is now more than ever the lingua franca of an increasingly international scientific research community. As a result, faculty members are increasingly conducting research activities in English. Also, the lack of knowledge about francophone-specific research issues can have a negative impact on the chances of researchers from francophone communities receiving funding. These individuals also face structural barriers, including inequitable evaluation criteria from major research granting agencies and a reduced availability of research support in French. Greater sensitivity to the unique needs of francophone communities would offset the structural biases that negatively affect proposals submitted by researchers from institutions in these communities.

Third, there are very close connections between researchers and the greater francophone minority community. The hope is that the faculty will be recognized as a critical link in the development and application of the knowledge that these communities have of themselves. While the faculty want to take on this social responsibility to produce data relevant to their communities, they may feel pressured that this type of work is not always recognized by the institutions and that they do not always have the sufficient resources at their disposal to achieve this.

3. Recommendations

To address these challenges, six recommendations emerged from the National Dialogue.²

They are as follows:

- a. That the federal government recognize and support research conducted in French and in the interest of francophone and Acadian communities as a separate priority area in the next Action Plan for Official Languages.**

² The recommendations are presented in detail on pages 72 to 74 in the final report of the National Dialogue cited above.

The federal government made a commitment in the February 2021 Official Languages Reform Document and in Bill C-13, currently under review, to take steps to foster the creation and dissemination of scientific knowledge in French. As part of its next Action Plan, the Government of Canada must address the progress toward substantive equality in this area. Among the positive measures that could be considered, the action plan could, for example, provide funding for the research community to exploit official language data from the 2021 Census and future data from the Survey on the Official Language Minority Population. It could also include measures to support the dissemination and mobilization of scientific knowledge and the development of French-language educational materials adapted to post-secondary programs in francophone minority communities.

b. That the Government of Canada fund the creation of the Service to Assist Research in French in Canada proposed by Acfas.

The small size of virtually all francophone minority post-secondary institutions and the resulting constraints (small cohorts, emphasis on teaching, insufficient financial resources, etc.) make it impossible to provide adequate support for research conducted in French in each of these institutions. However, the existence of research activities in French closely contributes to the vitality of francophone and Acadian communities, especially since they are often the focus of this research. As proposed by Acfas, a pan-Canadian service to support research in French is therefore necessary. As Acfas also pointed out in its submission to the consultations on the next Action Plan for Official Languages, [TRANSLATION] “such a service would allow the federal government to improve its support for the production and dissemination of knowledge in French.”³ (Acfas, 2022, p. 8).

c. That Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and the federal research granting agencies adopt equitable, targeted and systemic measures that

³ Acfas, 2022, *Soutenir la production et la diffusion des savoirs en français partout au pays*, Acfas brief submitted as part of the Cross-Canada Official Languages Consultations, p. 8. Online: https://www.acfas.ca/sites/default/files/documents_utiles/MemoireAcfasConsultationsPancanadiennes2022Final.pdf. [in French only]

support research conducted in French outside Quebec and research of interest to francophone and Acadian communities.

The measures taken by the federal research granting agencies in Canada do not ensure substantive equality in terms of the amount of research activity supported in French and research conducted for the benefit of francophone and Acadian communities. These agencies could make available envelopes and programs that are more in line with the needs and capacities of postsecondary institutions in francophone minority contexts, including colleges, and invite them to initiate a review of the ways in which excellence in French-language research is assessed.

Other measures that could be considered include:

- maintaining and expanding measures to rebalance the success rates of applications submitted in French;
- creating and maintaining funding programs in the long-term that target francophone and Acadian communities as the focus of research; and
- providing support for researchers from francophone and Acadian communities to participate in francophone research networks.

d. That the federal granting agencies supporting research and post-secondary institutions commit to addressing unconscious bias against research conducted in French and in the interests of francophone and Acadian communities.

Granting agencies also need to be supported to avoid reproducing unconscious language biases in the development of programs or initiatives. For example, the Dimensions tool administered by the three organizations to promote equity, diversity and inclusion in the Canadian research ecosystem does not consider linguistic minorities to be an under-represented group in research.

Other measures that could be considered include:

- adopting a policy to prevent review committees from using the publication impact factor;
- creating a board with the mandate to review the criteria for defining or measuring excellence, taking into account the reality of research in French;

- developing tools for monitoring the proportion of French-language applications submitted and funded, as well as those involving francophone and Acadian communities as the subject of research; and
- using support measures for application assessment committees to ensure that applications in French are properly assessed.

e. That the federal, provincial and territorial governments support the dissemination, mobilization and accessibility of knowledge produced in French and in the interest of francophone and Acadian communities.

Steps must be taken to ensure that faculty members can continue to perform their full teaching and research roles in the interest of francophone and Acadian communities. Governments should financially support knowledge dissemination and adaptation activities for the benefit of the scientific community, Canadian society and francophone and Acadian communities. For example, they could support the development and operation of French-language scientific journals, knowledge application activities and activities promoting scientific life in French across the country.

f. That the federal government support the ongoing development of research facilities in areas identified as priorities by francophone and Acadian communities and post-secondary institutions.

Building on the existing research ecosystem, a dialogue involving representatives of postsecondary institutions, francophone and Acadian communities and the federal government will identify priority research areas and institutions that can develop leadership and expertise in those areas. Second, with proper financial support, institutions will be able to respond to the need for developing, transferring and applying knowledge about francophone and Acadian communities, according to their respective specialties. The objective will be to ensure the completeness, on a national scale, of research themes of importance to the development of francophone and Acadian communities, and then to guarantee the sustainable funding of existing or new research bodies among the targeted institutions. Support for these research

bodies will ensure the equitable development of the network of francophone minority postsecondary institutions.

In addition to the six recommendations on French-language research and publishing made in the report of the National Dialogue, we are adding a final recommendation on institutional funding, which echoes the first priority recommendation of the report and section 7 of the report on ensuring the financial sustainability of French-language postsecondary education.

g. That the programs supporting the post-secondary sector in official language minority communities allow institutions to apply for support for their long-term activities.

Funding from federal programs is generally allocated to fund one-time projects, which does not really address the long-term needs of francophone minority post-secondary institutions. This type of funding does not allow institutions that apply for it to plan for the future. It creates uncertainty and requires a time investment at a time when there are insufficient human resources. This type of funding is based on short-term results and, therefore, it does not allow the recipient institutions to implement a planning and innovation strategy. In the area of research, revised programs could make it possible to hire full-time professors who could train a new generation of researchers and obtain funding from granting agencies, or better still, develop institutional support for research.

4. Conclusion

Research conducted in French outside Quebec and research on francophone and Acadian communities contributes to an intellectual life that benefits all of Canadian society, including the francophone communities themselves and federal institutions that need sound evidence on official languages in Canada.

The ACUFC will continue to work with its member institutions, the research community and partners such as Acfas to ensure that these efforts are sustained. For its part, in the interest of substantive equality, the federal government must take consistent action to ensure that the

conditions for the production and dissemination of knowledge in French are equivalent to those of the English-speaking majority.