



Universities Canada's submission to the Standing Committee on Science and Research:

Study on the Report of the External Advisory Panel on the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French

September 2026

Introduction

Universities Canada welcomes the work of the External Advisory Group on the Creation and Dissemination of Scientific Information in French and supports the overall direction of its report, *Research in French and Substantive Equality: An Opportunity*. The report provides an important roadmap for strengthening the vitality of research in French and advancing substantive equality across Canada's research ecosystem.

As the national voice of Canada's universities, Universities Canada represents institutions operating in English, French and both official languages, including institutions in Quebec and those serving Francophone minority communities. Universities play an important role in promoting cultural expression and enabling researchers to conduct and publish research in the language of their choice. A national approach must recognize both the central role of Quebec as a hub for French-language research in Canada and the distinct capacity challenges facing francophone and bilingual institutions in minority settings.

French-language research is an integral part of Canada's research ecosystem. It advances scientific knowledge, enriches the diversity of ideas and perspectives within Canadian research, responds to the needs of francophone communities across the country and strengthens Canada's presence within the international Francophonie. Supporting research in French is therefore not only a question of linguistic equity; it is an investment in the excellence, resilience and international competitiveness of Canadian research. Canada's bilingual character is itself a research advantage, creating opportunities to connect francophone and anglophone research networks and to strengthen collaboration within Canada and across the international Francophonie.

Universities Canada agrees with the report's finding that researchers who work in French continue to face structural barriers throughout the research lifecycle. These include inequities in access to research funding, challenges associated with evaluation and peer review, insufficient institutional supports and infrastructure and strong incentives to publish and disseminate research in English. These pressures can be particularly pronounced in fields where English predominates internationally, including the natural sciences, applied sciences and engineering. They also extend beyond the conduct of research itself to the availability of teaching materials, scholarly publishing, translation and other infrastructure needed to disseminate knowledge in French. Addressing these barriers will require sustained and coordinated action across the federal research ecosystem.

The report's three recommendations include: 1) strengthened governance through the establishment of a Secretariat for the Coordination of Research in French; 2) dedicated investments through the creation of a Research in French Support and Promotion Fund; and 3) stronger leadership on the part of the Government of Canada in terms of compliance, data transparency and accountability.





Universities Canada recommends that the Committee call on the Government of Canada to:

- establish the proposed Secretariat for the Coordination of Research in French with a clear mandate, defined accountabilities, alignment with the broader federal research system and meaningful university participation, ensuring that it complements rather than duplicates existing structures
- create a new and dedicated Research in French Support and Promotion Fund, supported by adequate and predictable funding that is additional to existing federal research investments; the fund should reflect the different costs and capacity needs across disciplines
- strengthen federal leadership by improving French-language peer-review capacity, publishing annual disaggregated data and reporting publicly on progress

Implementation should respect provincial and territorial jurisdiction, recognize Quebec's central role and reflect differences in institutional size, regional context and disciplinary needs.

Strengthening federal leadership and coordination

Universities Canada supports the report's recommendation to strengthen federal coordination through a Secretariat for the Coordination of Research in French. The report rightly identifies the fragmented nature of current programs and responsibilities as a barrier to sustained progress.

A more coordinated federal approach should ensure that the needs of French-language research are incorporated into broader decisions concerning research funding, talent, innovation and research infrastructure. Universities and other post-secondary institutions should be active partners in the development and implementation of this approach, reflecting the diversity of institutional missions, sizes and linguistic contexts across the country.

Any new governance mechanism such as the Secretariat should have a clear mandate, complement existing structures and demonstrate tangible value for researchers and institutions. A new secretariat should strengthen coordination and accountability without creating unnecessary administrative duplication and should reinforce—not replace or dilute—the responsibilities of existing federal research institutions to support research in both official languages.

The creation of a dedicated coordinating body should not lead the federal granting councils or other research organizations to view French-language research as primarily the responsibility of the Secretariat. Rather, the Secretariat should help embed substantive equality across the federal research ecosystem by strengthening coordination, identifying systemic barriers, sharing best practices and holding federal actors accountable for advancing research in French within their respective mandates.

Similarly, the Secretariat should contribute to an integrated bilingual research ecosystem rather than creating parallel systems for research in French and English. Its success should ultimately be measured by whether researchers have equitable opportunities to conduct, fund, evaluate and disseminate their work in either official language throughout Canada's mainstream research system.

Stronger coordination should also encourage greater collaboration between francophone institutions in Quebec and those serving francophone communities elsewhere in Canada. Building stronger networks across regions would help share expertise, infrastructure and opportunities while strengthening the national French-language research ecosystem.





Investing in French-language research and research capacity

Universities Canada supports the creation of a new and predictably funded Research in French Support and Promotion Fund.

Dedicated measures to support research in French should complement, rather than substitute for, the responsibility of the federal granting councils to provide equitable opportunities and appropriate support for French-language research through their core programs.

Its design and delivery should involve the federal granting agencies and ensure that researchers across the full range of disciplines can access support. Federal research funding should provide researchers working in French with equitable opportunities to compete for support and should recognize the additional costs that can accompany conducting, publishing, translating and disseminating research in French. Investments should also strengthen the institutional capacity required to support researchers, particularly at francophone and bilingual institutions and at institutions serving francophone minority communities.

Funding mechanisms should also recognize that the costs of research vary substantially by discipline. Natural sciences, applied sciences and engineering often require laboratories, specialized equipment and larger research teams and French-language research in these fields may lack the critical mass available in anglophone research networks. A one-size-fits-all approach to funding will therefore not achieve substantive equality across disciplines.

The report's proposed investments in emerging researchers, scholarly publishing, research partnerships, translation, digital infrastructure and knowledge mobilization are important elements of a more sustainable French-language research ecosystem. Any new responsibilities for institutions should be accompanied by adequate and predictable federal resources.

Particular attention should be given to the infrastructure required to publish and disseminate research in French. University presses, scholarly journals, translation services and digital dissemination platforms are essential components of the research ecosystem, especially in the social sciences and humanities, yet they can be difficult for smaller institutions to sustain. Federal programs should be designed so that institutions of different sizes and capacities can access this support.

Federal support should go beyond bilingual abstracts by enabling the full translation of research outputs where this would materially improve their reach and accessibility. Any new translation requirements should be developed with researchers, journals and institutions and accompanied by dedicated federal resources.

Ensuring fair evaluation and recognition of research in French

Universities Canada supports continued efforts to ensure that federal research evaluation and peer-review processes provide equitable treatment to applications submitted in either official language.

Researchers should be able to submit proposals in French with confidence that appropriate linguistic expertise will be available throughout the assessment process. A lack of available French-speaking reviewers, or even the perception that suitable reviewers may not be available, can influence a researcher's decision about which language to use in an application. Federal agencies should continue working to ensure sufficient reviewer capacity in both official languages and to identify practical barriers that may unintentionally discourage applications in French.

Application requirements should also be examined to ensure substantive rather than merely formal equality between the two official languages. For example, agencies should consider whether identical word or page limits can create unintended disadvantages when researchers express complex ideas in French.





Evaluation criteria should also recognize the full range of ways in which research generates impact, including French-language publications, community-engaged research and knowledge mobilization directed toward francophone communities. Research conducted and disseminated in French may follow different publication pathways and may not always appear in the highest-profile international journals. These differences should not diminish the value assigned to rigorous research that responds to community, cultural or societal needs.

Improved collection and publication of data on application and success rates by language would also contribute to greater transparency and allow governments, institutions and the research community to assess progress over time. At the same time, this data should be interpreted carefully. Smaller numbers of French-language applications can produce significant fluctuations in percentage-based indicators and quantitative measures should therefore be considered alongside broader evidence about researcher experiences, institutional capacity and outcomes.

Supporting the next generation of researchers

The long-term vitality of research in French will depend on the ability of Canada's universities to recruit, train and retain the next generation of French-speaking researchers.

Universities Canada therefore welcomes the report's attention to graduate education, student mobility and the availability of French-language teaching and research resources. Federal support for graduate students, early-career researchers and research partnerships can help ensure that researchers are able to build successful careers in French across disciplines and regions.

This support must extend to the teaching and research resources that make French-language training possible. In some disciplines, French-language textbooks and other pedagogical materials are less readily available and can be more costly than comparable English-language resources. Strengthening the supply and accessibility of these materials is an important part of building a sustainable pipeline of francophone researchers.

Strengthening Canada's research advantage

Canada's two official-language research communities are a distinctive national strength. At a time of growing international competition for research talent and partnerships, Canada should take full advantage of its connections to both the anglophone and francophone research worlds.

Substantive equality should not require the creation of two isolated or parallel research systems. Canada has an opportunity to build a genuinely interconnected bilingual research ecosystem in which researchers working in French can participate fully in national and international research networks while maintaining the ability to create and disseminate knowledge in French.

A stronger ecosystem for research in French can expand international collaboration, strengthen Canada's scientific diplomacy and increase the reach of Canadian discoveries. It can help Canada attract and retain francophone international students and researchers and deepen partnerships across the international Francophonie. It can also ensure that scientific knowledge reaches francophone communities in Canada in the language in which it is most useful to them.

At the same time, research policy should recognize that the value of research extends beyond scientific outputs alone. French-language research supports cultural vitality, linguistic rights, education and the social and economic development of francophone communities. Societal and community needs should therefore remain an important lens through which measures to strengthen research in French are designed and assessed.





Conclusion

Universities Canada recommends that the Committee call on the federal government to move forward on the report's recommendations in close partnership with universities, researchers, francophone communities and other research-sector organizations. Implementation should be guided by the principles of substantive equality, research excellence, institutional capacity and sustained federal investment. It should also recognize differences across disciplines and regions and ensure that measures designed to support research in French produce meaningful capacity and outcomes rather than symbolic commitments alone.

A coordinated and adequately resourced approach can help ensure that researchers do not have to choose between working in French and succeeding within Canada's research system and can position bilingualism as a distinctive strength of Canadian research at home and abroad.



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