



Collège des chaires de recherche  
sur le monde francophone  
de l'Université d'Ottawa

# The University of Ottawa: an institution for training and research in French and a partner for Quebec

Brief submitted by the University of Ottawa to the  
Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes as part  
of the public consultations for the renewal of the Québec  
Policy on the Canadian Francophonie

**PREPARED IN COLLABORATION WITH**

the Collège des chaires de recherche sur le monde francophone  
the Office of the Vice-President, Research and  
the Office of the Vice-President, International and Francophonie

May 2021

# Table of Contents

<b>Objective</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A. A history rooted in the Francophonie and a relationship to Quebec</b>	<b>4</b>
Francophone educational institution	4
Special relationship with Quebec	4
<b>B. A cultural bridge between Quebec and the Canadian Francophonie</b>	<b>5</b>
A strongly felt presence of Quebecers	5
A locus of francization	6
<b>C. Research for the development of academic activity in French</b>	<b>7</b>
A university dedicated to research in French	7
Stable and lasting research bodies	8
Research activities for and with the Francophonie	9
<b>D. Priority projects to strengthen ties between Francophone institutions</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Formalize existing collaborations	10
2. Create a Consortium for Research within the Francophonie (Quebec and Canadian Francophonies)	11
3. Updating and redesigning research funding – a new contribution from Quebec to research within the Francophonie	11
Towards a recognized and stimulating rapprochement	12

# Objective

This brief is part of the Sommet sur le rapprochement des francophonies canadiennes, an initiative jointly organized by the Quebec government and the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA).

The University of Ottawa is pleased to present this document, which presents a series of reflections and areas for action on issues in post-secondary education, training, and research with a view to strengthening ties between Quebec and the University of Ottawa community. This initiative is the outcome of a joint effort by the Collège des chaires de recherche sur le monde francophone; the Office of the Vice-President, Research; and the Office of the Vice-President, International and Francophonie. The leaders of these bodies seek to play an active role in the consultation process for the renewal of the Québec Policy on the Canadian Francophonie.

Through this brief, the University of Ottawa hopes to remind readers of its status as a flagship institution when it comes to education and research within the Canadian Francophonie, and to underscore the missions and challenges that unite the University of Ottawa with Quebec society as a whole. These two realities, each a product of the history of Francophone Ontario and of Francophone Canada, form a foundation and an indisputable asset; they enable us to come together to contemplate future collaborations to foster the professional and cultural flourishing of Francophones, to promote the French language in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, and to foster vitality within Ontario's Francophone communities.

The perspectives provided in this brief will enrich the deliberations of the Quebec government, particularly that of the Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes, as it prepares its next Policy on the Canadian Francophonie. The purpose is, as Sonia LeBel, Minister Responsible for Canadian Relations and the Canadian Francophonie, has put it, to “determine the actions to be implemented in order to create concrete ties of solidarity between Francophones in Quebec and those across Canada.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Sonia LeBel, <https://sometfranco2021.gouv.qc.ca/>

## A. A history rooted in the Francophonie and a relationship to Quebec

Today, the University of Ottawa is the world's largest institution providing bilingual education. Its student body includes **13,000 Francophones** and some **6,000 Francophiles**, accounting for approximately 40 percent of enrolment. Most of its Francophone students hail from Ontario and Quebec.

### A Francophone educational institution

Located in the heart of the nation's capital, the University of Ottawa is a leader in French-language education throughout the province of Ontario. It is also the institution of higher learning that offers the most programs in French as a minority language in the entire educational system outside of Quebec. More than 450 programs are offered fully or partially in French, and are noted for their variety at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. All fields are represented in these programs, including health, education, language rights, entrepreneurship, applied sciences, and social sciences.

French has been part of the University of Ottawa's culture since its founding. In fact, the 1965 act of incorporation lists "to preserve and develop French culture in Ontario" among the institution's objects and purposes, alongside furthering bilingualism and biculturalism. In November 1974, the University of Ottawa adopted its Regulation on Bilingualism which, among other things, gives French precedence over English in all official communications. The regulations firstly ensure that all services are proactively provided in both official languages, and secondly grant students the right to submit written work and exams in the official language of their choice, with some exceptions. In September 2015, the University of Ottawa's French-language undergraduate programs and services obtained partial designation under Ontario's *French Language Services Act*. This designation ensures that the University of Ottawa's Francophone character will continue by protecting university education and services in French.

### A special relationship with Quebec

As Vice-President, International and Francophonie, Dr. Sanni Yaya, has pointed out, "our history is marked by very strong ties to the Quebec nation. Over 5,500 students live in Quebec, and each day hundreds of academic and support staff members who work within our community come from Quebec. The University of Ottawa has educated generations of students, and has thousands of alumni, from Quebec; they represent us around the world."<sup>2</sup> Not only does Quebec enjoy a presence in our university community, but the two entities indeed have shared interests when it comes to promoting and defending the French fact. Two of our researchers recently stated, echoing Louise Harel, that "Francophones across the country have a *duty to the future* when it comes to their language"; they furthermore recognized that every Quebec government since the 1960s has undertaken initiatives to support the Francophonie in Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal, L., Normand, M. (2020). Le Québec et la francophonie canadienne : un « devoir d'avenir ». Policy Options / Options politiques. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2020/le-quebec-et-la-francophonie-canadienne-un-devoir-davenir/>

## B. A cultural bridge between Quebec and the Canadian Francophonie

### A strongly felt presence of Quebecers

Francophones, and Franco-Ontarians in particular, have made and continue to make the University of Ottawa campus a dynamic bilingual space. Today, thanks to rapid demographic growth in the city of Gatineau, campus life in French is enriched and stimulated by the presence of a very large number of students from Quebec. Each faculty has a large number of students educated in Quebec's CEGEP system. Every year, faculties host open houses that attract many young Francophone students, both from the region and from elsewhere in Quebec, to develop their potential and pursue their education in a French living environment. Quebec's secondary schools and CEGEPs enjoy a robust and recognized educational continuity with the University of Ottawa.

Some of these students, through their professional success and social involvement, go on to do the University proud and contribute to the vitality of Quebec. Examples include Véronique Rivest, a well-known Gatineau-based sommelier who placed second in a worldwide competition of her peers;<sup>3</sup> Lino Maurizio (B.Soc.Sc. 1989), originally from Valleyfield, now Chief Security Officer and Senior Vice-President of Global Security at SNC-Lavalin;<sup>4</sup> and the MP for Hull–Aylmer, Greg Fergus, who serves as parliamentary secretary to the prime minister, to the president of the Treasury Board, and to the minister of Digital Government.<sup>5</sup>

A sizeable contingent of full- and part-time faculty members cross the bridges between Gatineau and Ottawa every morning and evening. In addition to those in the professoriate, Quebecers work for the University of Ottawa's many services by the hundreds. Year after year, the institution has ranked among the top five employers in the greater Ottawa-Gatineau area, benefitting from the expertise, skill, and professionalism of nearly one thousand Quebec residents. This remarkable contribution can be felt economically—and even more so culturally and linguistically. It is impossible to overstate Quebec's contribution to the University of Ottawa project. For Canada's Francophonie, daily cross-border exchanges such as these shape a culture that is unparalleled in the country, one that deeply permeates the traditions and identity of the University of Ottawa. In turn, Quebec can only benefit from such financial, educational, and cultural investment, which brings joy to hundreds of families in the Outaouais region and a student body of thousands that is home to some of French-speaking Canada's greatest achievers.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uottawa.ca/tabaret/en/content/secrets-sommelier>

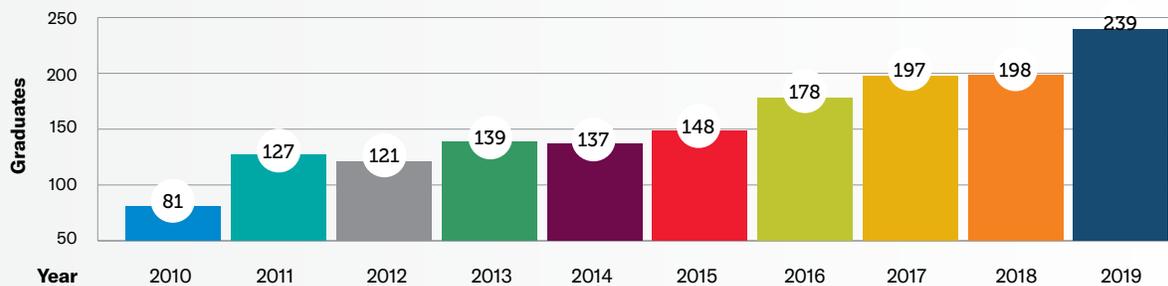
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.uottawa.ca/tabaret/en/content/passport-success>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.uottawa.ca/tabaret/en/content/friends-high-places>

## A locus of francization

Importantly, the University of Ottawa is furthermore a major centre for francization outside Quebec, with the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) playing a leading role. Since 2006, OLBI's French Immersion Stream has allowed students from French as a Second Language programs to pursue their university studies in a bilingual environment. Thanks to collaboration with the University's six host faculties, 75 programs of study are offered in affiliation with the immersion program, from administration to anthropology, computer engineering, and biopharmaceutical sciences. This unique path of study includes language courses to supplement disciplinary learning as well as linguistic, academic, and social supports through the various services offered by OLBI, the Immersion Mentoring Centre, and the Immersion Club. Since 2008, over 1,580 students have graduated from the French Immersion Stream. In 2019–2020, enrolment sat at 721 students—and the number is growing every year. This vast offering, the largest of its kind in Canada, enables hundreds of students from across the country to shine in their respective fields in French, often by holding important positions in companies based in Quebec, elsewhere in Canada, and around the world, and within the provincial and federal public services.

Number of graduates from the French Immersion Stream<sup>6</sup>



These programs are complemented by language support for faculty, language courses for staff, an extensive research program in second-language training, and a master's degree in Bilingualism Studies. The Centre for Language Learning oversees intensive French as a Second Language and English as a Second Language programs designed for learners with different backgrounds and a wide range of language needs. Its activities support the University's vision of a bilingual campus and its internationalization efforts. Its new courses and services, including a range of programs designed to enhance the student experience, also enrich the learning process.

<sup>6</sup> OLBI, Annual Report 2019–2020.

For all these reasons, we present the University of Ottawa as being a true gateway to Quebec. Our institution serves to raise Quebec's profile among the many Francophones and Francophiles it attracts from across Canada and abroad. The University of Ottawa has its *finger on the pulse* of the different cultural realities at play in the provinces and nations that make up the Canada of today. Not only does this make the University more permeable to societal debates (as the news in the past year has shown), but it also makes it a unique and original space for all communities it comprises, including those of the Canadian Francophonie and of Quebec.

## C. Research for the development of academic activity in French

### A university dedicated to research in French

Published in 2019, the University of Ottawa's strategic plan, *Transformation 2030*, puts forth new actions to strengthen the University's roots in the Francophonie and affirm the uniqueness of its Francophone and bilingual character among the major research universities. The Francophonie is one of the cross-cutting themes in the plan—and one of its most ambitious, given the number and scale of the projects involved. This strategic plan commits to recruiting more Francophone undergraduate and graduate students, to achieving greater quantity and quality of research on the Francophonie, to giving the Francophonie greater visibility on campus, and to developing life in French all over campus.

The governing bodies of the University of Ottawa have gradually adapted to meet the challenges of Francophone research. Since 1997, the Office of the Vice-President, Research, has been tasked with developing, supporting, and promoting research in both official languages (French and English). The Francophonie is central to all of its activities both internally and externally, including the use of French as a working language and support for research on the Francophonie. A significant portion of the budget is devoted to these matters. In 2020, following the recommendations in the Cardinal report on the state of French at the University of Ottawa, the University created the Office of the Vice-President, International and Francophonie, which plays a key role in fulfilling the institution's historic role, set out in its founding charter, to support and contribute to the growth and flourishing of the Franco-Ontarian community. The Office of the Vice-President works in collaboration with many stakeholders and establishes partnerships with leaders in academia as well as the public and private sectors in the Francophone community in Ontario, elsewhere in Canada, and abroad.

## Stable and lasting research bodies

The University of Ottawa is home to a number of research centres and institutes that embody excellence in research—both research conducted in French and that in which the Francophonie is the object of study.

In 2003, the University established a program of Canadian Francophonie research chairs, now coordinated by the **Collège des chaires de recherche sur le monde francophone** (CCRMF). This program brings together more than 15 researchers, including visiting scholars, with recognized expertise in areas as diverse as language rights; public policy on cultural heritage; cultural shifts in Quebec; healthcare for Francophones in Ontario, Canada, and sub-Saharan Africa; political science; and social policy. The impact of these research chairs is seen in the formation of vast networks of researchers from Canada and abroad, which in turn contributes to the training of hundreds of graduate and post-doctoral students. The annual budget allocated to the chairs is an important lever for securing national and international research grants, organizing prominent research activities, and spreading the influence of studies on the Francophonie throughout the community. This is a significant contribution by the University of Ottawa, which has committed to investing more than \$3.5 million in this program over the next ten years.

The University also supports the development and activities of Francophone research centres and institutes, notably the **Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Citizenship and Minorities** (CIRCEM)—one of the University's most active research centres and one of the bridges linking it to the Quebec Francophonie. In addition, the Centre on Governance and the Centre for Law, Technology and Society are two important players in research conducted on French on campus.

The University has been home to the **Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française** (CRCCF) since 1958. The CRCCF is concerned with the society and culture of North America's French-speaking communities, both past and present. It conducts research and disseminates knowledge in addition to preserving and promoting an extensive collection of documentary resources. It is one of the gems of research for and by French Ontario.

The **Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute** (OLBI) was established in 2007 as part of the University of Ottawa's vision for the future, in which academic excellence, innovation, and a commitment to bilingualism all reinforce each other. As Canada's new leader in official languages and bilingualism, OLBI strengthens, develops, and promotes training and research in language teaching, evaluation and policy development. It brings together the strengths of all those working in official languages and bilingualism at the University of Ottawa.

## Research activities for and with the Francophonie

The University of Ottawa has always afforded a special place to Quebec, its students, and its researchers. Because of its location, it receives some 5,500 students from Quebec each year, in addition to many young researchers and professors who live in the province. The University of Ottawa has also been the site of several occasional yet prestigious collaborations in recent years, having hosted the 2009 edition of the Congrès de l'Acfas, which boasted 3,163 registered attendees, 155 multidisciplinary symposiums, and many special events. In the near future, the University is expected to once again host the event, which is essential to the vitality of French-language academic activity. The University of Ottawa also hosted the 2015 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. More than 9,000 people registered, with 69 scholarly associations present. The Congress had a strong Francophone component.

The University of Ottawa, its Offices of the Vice-President, and its faculties (which conduct research and are critical to initiating activity among Francophone researchers), are all actively involved in the Mois de la Francophonie. Each year, dozens of events, roundtables, conferences, and research discussions place Francophone knowledge front and centre in the University's activities.

The University of Ottawa is also a very active partner within the international Francophonie and has formed close ties with major universities in France, Belgium, and other countries. It also plays a pivotal role within the Centre Jacques Cartier, most notably in the Entretiens Jacques Cartier, a large-scale research event in which the University of Ottawa occupies an increasingly major role.

In addition, the University of Ottawa Press (UOP) is critical to promoting Francophone research and advancing the Francophone community. Through its publishing program, translation program, and marketing efforts, the UOP provides solid support to the Francophonie in national and international publishing circles as well as in the political and cultural spheres. It is important to note that the leading publishing focus of the UOP is dedicated to the Francophonie; accordingly, many collections and journals are devoted to Francophone publishing. Furthermore, all of the UOP's collections are bilingual, and about half of its catalogue is in French.

## D. Priority projects to strengthen ties between Francophone institutions

Owing to its size, enrolment, and proximity to Quebec, the University of Ottawa plays a key role in relations between post-secondary institutions in Quebec and the Canadian Francophonie. However, these relationships and collaborations should be deepened and enhanced. Francophone researchers, research centres and institutes concerned with the Francophonie, and the entire landscape of research conducted in French would all benefit greatly from optimizing the available resources to advance research within our Francophone institutions. All too often, the provincial border emphasizes difference serves to reinforce the sense of otherness between the French-speaking communities of Ontario and Quebec. And yet, geographically speaking, Ottawa is closer to Montreal than Montreal is to Quebec City. It would be advisable to explore ways to make our collaborations (though they are already many and far-reaching) stronger and more formal, just as we do with our international counterparts. Collaborations with Ontario's bilingual and Francophone universities end up being minimized, and even trivialized, even though they are initiated on a regular basis. There is an urgent need to open up research within the Francophonie and push it beyond provincial borders in order to grow and develop fruitful collaborations. At present, French-language research taking place between Ontario and Quebec is limited to individuals (i.e., researchers) and a handful of civil-society players (e.g., academic journals and research organizations such as Acfas). We must find ways to facilitate collaborations, promote exchanges and partnerships, and formally institute the most promising collaborative practices for researchers and their universities.

To support collaborative practices in research on Quebec and the Canadian Francophonie, we believe it is important to prioritize the following three areas:

### 1. Formalize existing collaborations

Formalizing existing collaborations between researchers at Quebec universities and the University of Ottawa is key. Formalizing here means helping to establish and deepen such collaborations. This could take the form of “Quebec-Francophonie research groups,” which, when recognized as such, would allow members to access various grants aimed at strengthening research collaboration within the Francophonie (see point 3 below). A more formal and systematic framework surrounding the practices that already exist among researchers and research bodies would help to make such collaborations sustainable, to secure joint funding, and to develop effective tools for promoting and disseminating research knowledge in French. No institution can singlehandedly address the issue of galvanizing knowledge within the Canadian Francophonie. Rather, this must be supported by joint activities coupled with a robust and dynamic structure for dissemination.

## **2. Create a Consortium for Research within the Francophonie (Quebec and Canadian Francophonies)**

Stronger coordination among all the drivers of research within Quebec and the Canadian Francophonies could facilitate the realization of major research projects on the Francophonie in Quebec, Canada, and North America. To this end, the Collège des chaires de recherche sur le monde francophone (CCRMF) of the University of Ottawa is already at work establishing a collaborative structure for coordinating research on the Francophonie along with the Chaire pour le développement de la recherche sur la culture d'expression française en Amérique du Nord (CEFAN) at the Université Laval and the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities (CIRLM) at the Université de Moncton. A Consortium for Research within the Francophonie (Quebec and Canadian Francophonies) would help determine the gaps and needs that exist within the research community when it comes to the Francophonie, as well as any infrastructure that is lacking, and to determine the priorities for a revival of collaborative research on the Francophonie between Quebec, the Canadian Francophonie, and Acadia.

## **3. Updating and redesigning research funding— a new contribution from Quebec to research within the Francophonie**

Reviewing and increasing funding for research on the Francophonie, with partners from Quebec and from the Canadian Francophonie, remains a cornerstone component of the reform being envisaged. This aspect will consolidate existing collaborations and foster the establishment of several others, which stands to greatly benefit Quebec and the federal government, which are the central players in developing research on the Francophonie across Canada. Following a review of the various grant and research assistance programs between Quebec, French Canada and Acadia, it will be essential to offer Francophone researchers new and flexible funding opportunities; these opportunities must be well suited to their projects associated with Francophone communities and to their collaborations with Quebec researchers (see point 1).

## **Towards a recognized and stimulating rapprochement**

For anyone familiar with the history of the University of Ottawa, there can be no doubt that its contribution has been significant and unceasing when it comes to bolstering the French fact in Ontario—but also in Quebec and in Canada more broadly. Quebec is home to generations of young people who sought their education in Ottawa, professors who have taught there since its founding, and researchers who have conducted their projects there. Some of them have made Quebec, along with its population, policies, and governance, their object of study—and in so doing, have contributed concretely to its development. In many ways, the University of Ottawa is an institution partly rooted in the political, academic, and cultural life of Quebec. As the Quebec government reflects on its policy on the Canadian Francophonie and its ties of solidarity with the Francophone and Acadian communities, and “at a time when resilience and solidarity are all the more essential for our communities,” the University of Ottawa seeks to present itself as a leading partner. Furthermore, the University of Ottawa has reason to believe that the Quebec government is an essential ally in effectively fulfilling its mission towards the Francophonie, not only in Ontario but elsewhere in Canada and abroad.

Signature : 

Date : May 25, 2021

Martine Lagacé  
Associate Vice-President, Research Promotion and Development

Signature : 

Date : May 25, 2021

Yves Pelletier  
Associate Vice-President, Francophonie

Signature : 

Date : May 25, 2021

Martin Meunier  
Director, Collège des chaires de recherche sur le monde francophone