

A photograph of a library aisle with bookshelves and hanging light bulbs. The shelves are filled with books, and the lighting is warm and focused on the foreground, with the background being softly blurred.

Graduate Student Caucus

Annual Meeting 2024

Data compiled by Marc Lynch



Contents

- Overview
- Student Awareness
- Enrollment
- BIPOC Representation
- Course Offerings and Requirements
- MA and PhD Completion Rates
- Tuition and Funding
- Teaching Assistantships
- Graduate Student Concerns
- Faculty-Student Events
- Professional Development
- Student Comments
- Final Comments

Overview - 27 Canadian institutions with a graduate program in English

13 Faculty Reps (48% up from 41% in 2023)

- Acadia University
- Brock University
- Carleton University
- Dalhousie University
- Trent University
- University of Calgary
- Université de Montréal
- Université de Montreal (Section études on Anglais)
- University of New Brunswick
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of Ottawa
- University of Saskatchewan
- U of Victoria

15 Student Reps (55% down from 56%)

- Brock University (Dep. of English)
- Brock University (Interdisciplinary Humanities)
- Queen's University
- Trent University
- University of British Columbia
- University of British Columbia Okanagan
- University of Calgary
- University of Guelph
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Toronto
- University of Victoria
- York University
- Western University
- Wilfrid Laurier

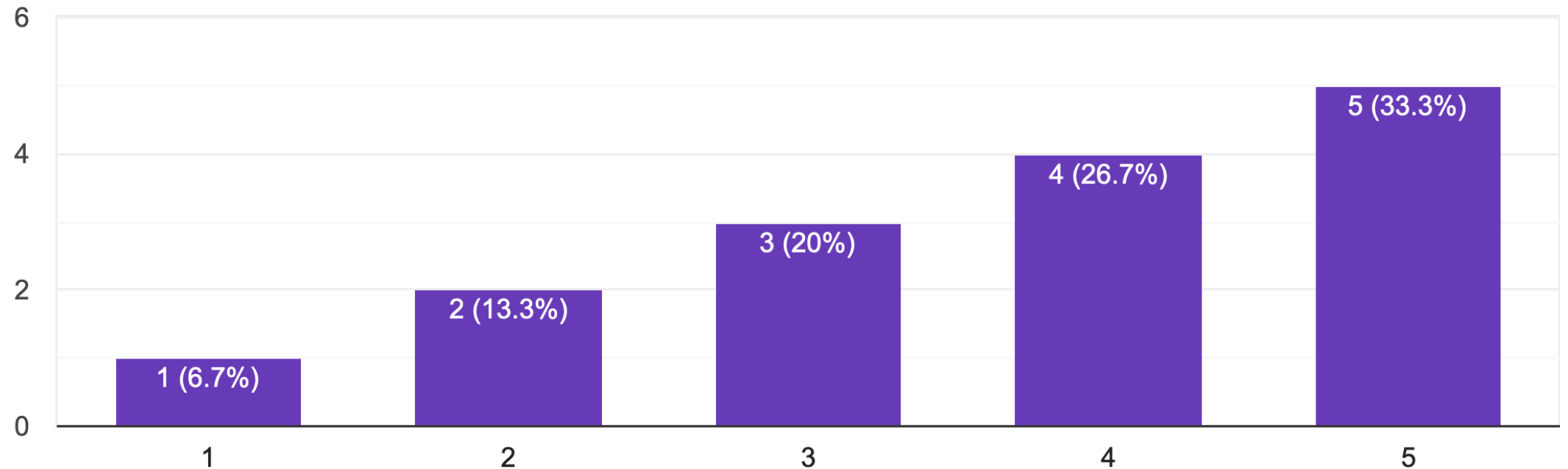
Institutions not Represented

- Athabasca University
- Concordia University
- McGill University
- McMaster University
- Ryerson University
- Simon Fraser University
- University of Alberta
- University of Lethbridge
- University of Manitoba
- University of Regina
- University of Waterloo
- University of Western Ontario
- University of Windsor

2024 Results

How aware of (a) ACCUTE, (b) the GSC, and (c) this survey were you at the beginning of September 2023? (1 being completely unaware, 5 being aware of all three)

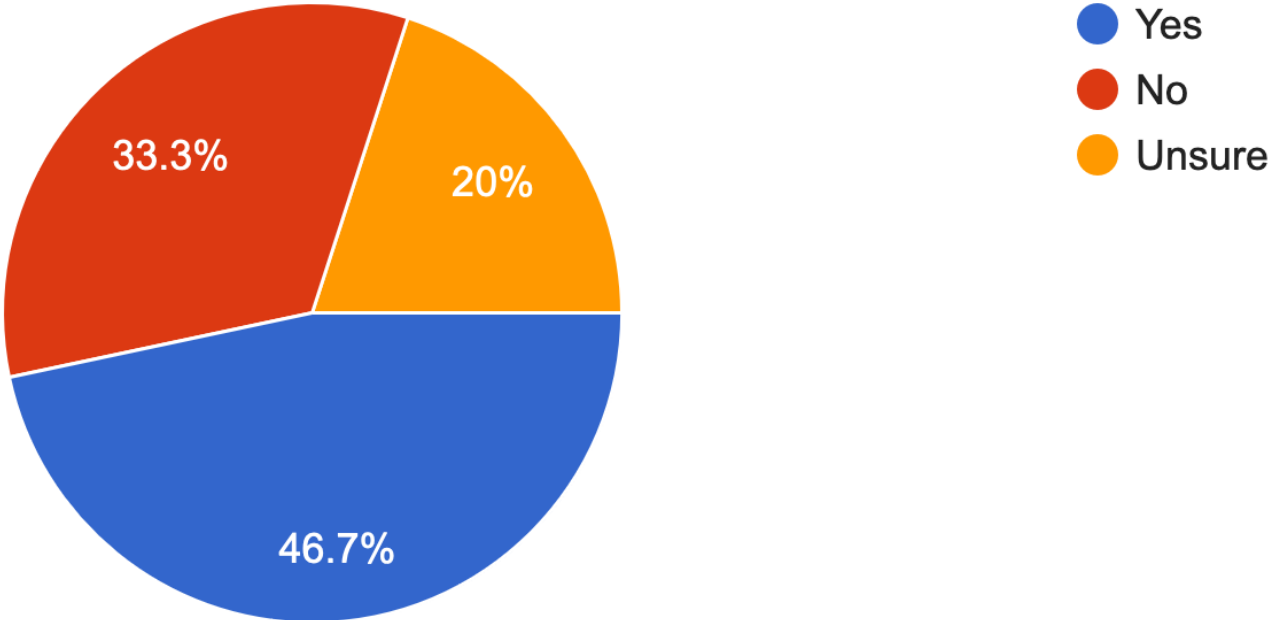
15 responses



**In 2022, the majority ranked their awareness as 1, 2 and 3 (42%, 10%, 26%, respectively).

Does the Graduate Student Representative plan to attend the GSC meeting at ACCUTE 2024?

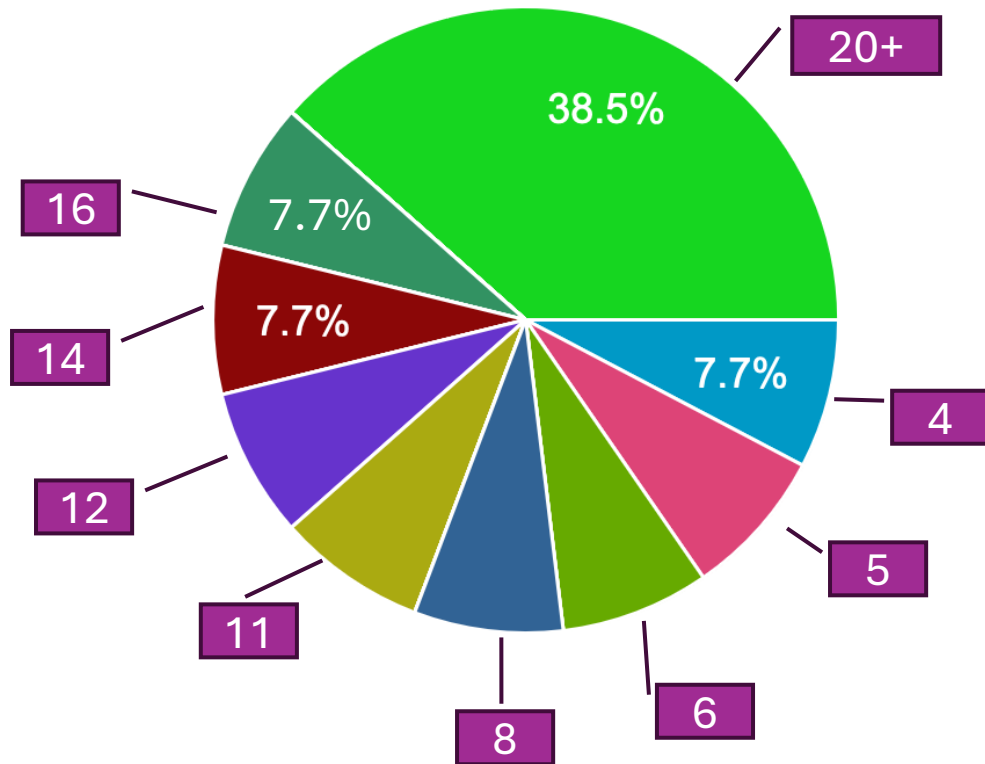
15 responses



**In 2022, only 26.3% planned to attend. The majority, at over 40%, were unsure.

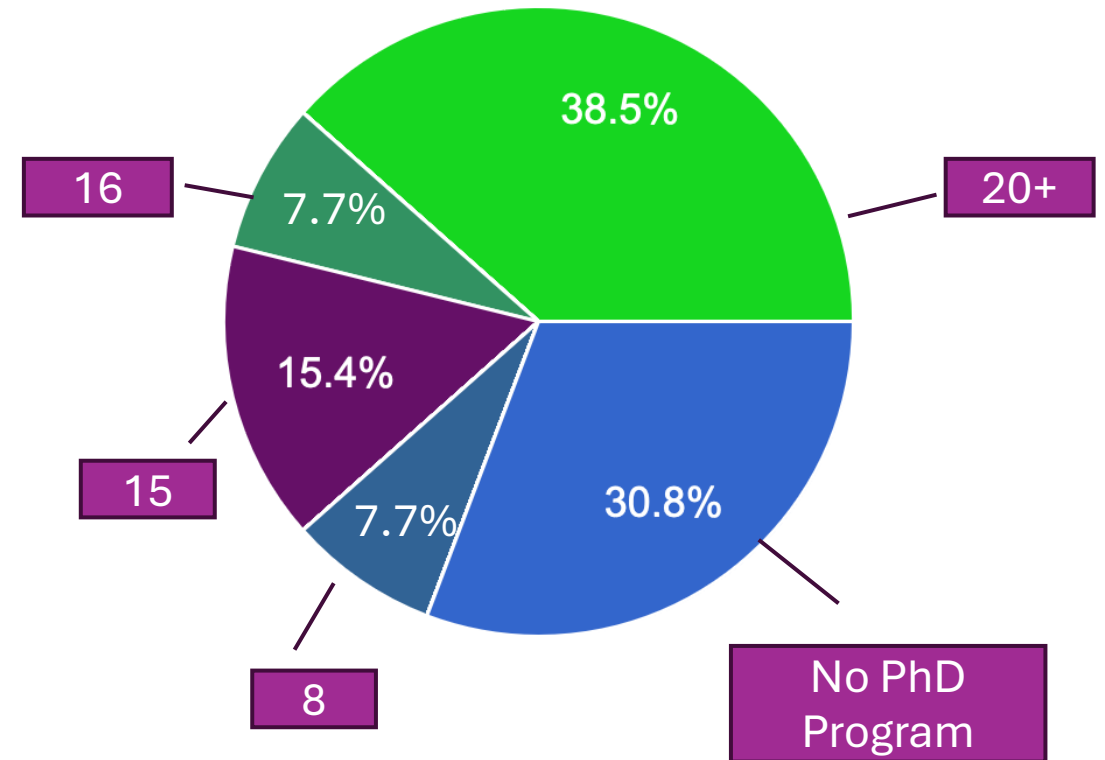
Total Enrollment (13/27 institutions)

Current Number of MA Students



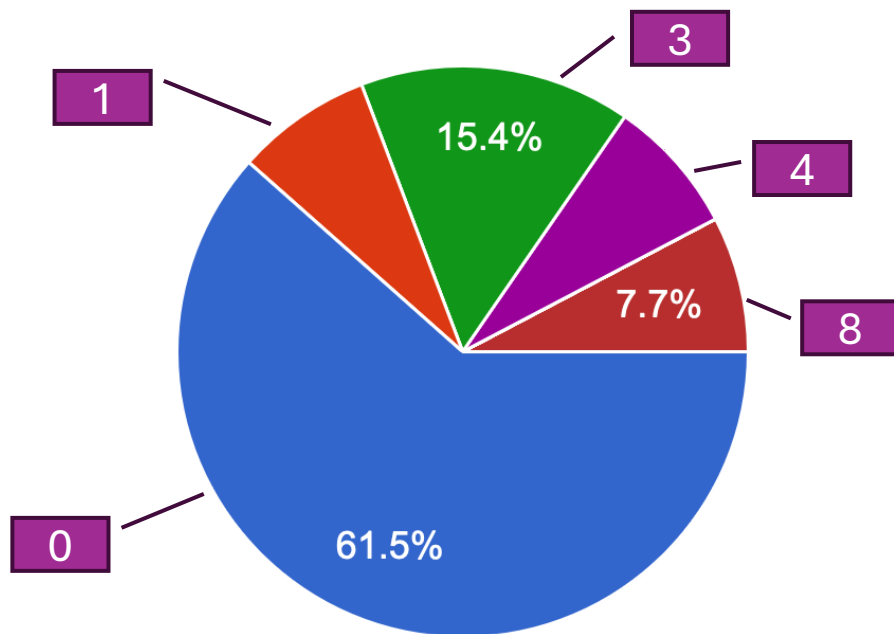
Current MA Students 176+; 92 new students in 2023

Current Number of PhD Students



Current PhD Students 144+; 21 new students in 2023

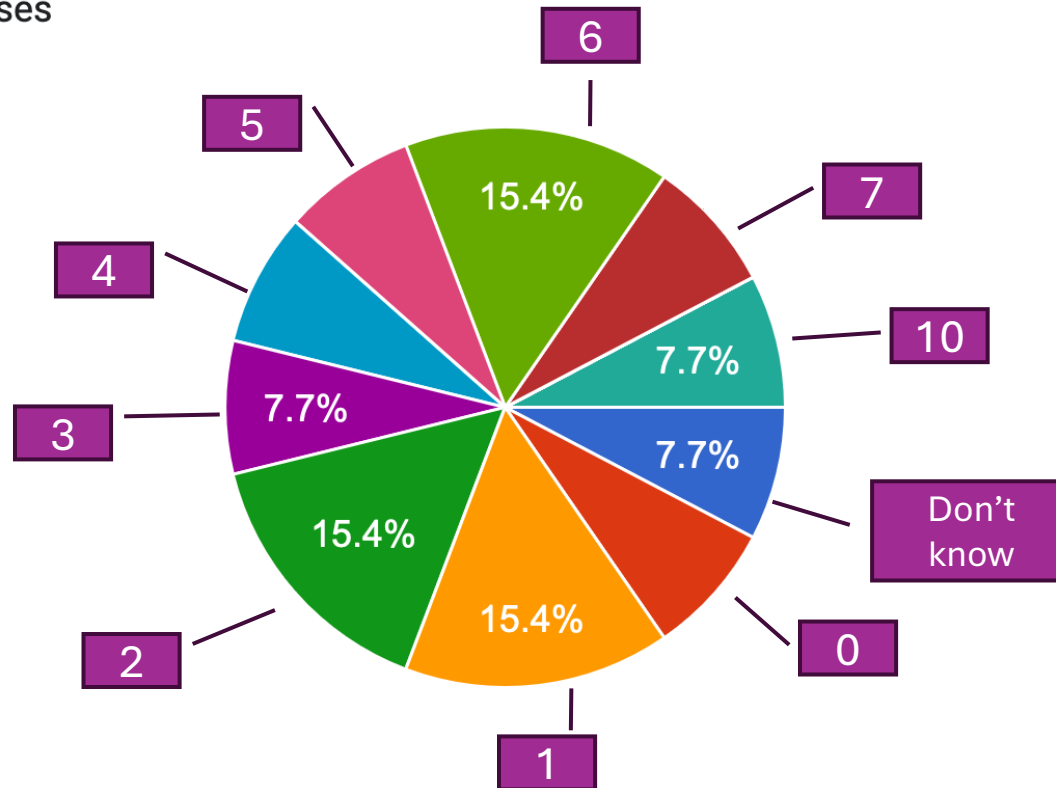
Total Postdocs (13/27 institutions)



Total Post-docs from documented institutions = 16

To the best of your knowledge, how many faculty members identify as BIPOC and/or are part of a minority group (LGBTQ2S)?

13 responses



“We haven't hired a new assistant prof on tenure track since 2008. We are almost all Associate and Full Profs. Very white, though we do have non-white faculty cross-listed with African Studies.”

Overview:

- 38 total (roughly 7.7% of faculty)
- 83% of institutions have EDI plan in development (Universities Canada 2022)

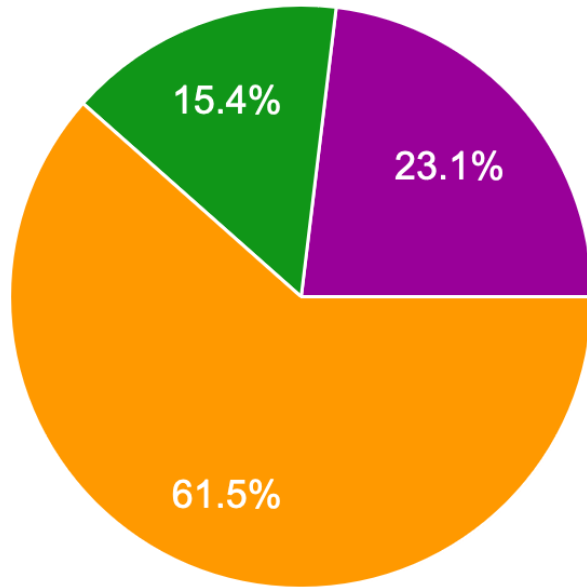
Takeaways:

- Requires self-identification
- Many of the faculty respondents felt uncomfortable with the question; Those that did respond said, “Pretty white, pretty straight, pretty cis.”
- U Montréal: “The only section in which over 70% of the faculty identify as BIPOC and/or LGBTQ2S the former English department is.”
- 14 unrepresented institutions

Course Offerings (Fall, Winter, & Summer)

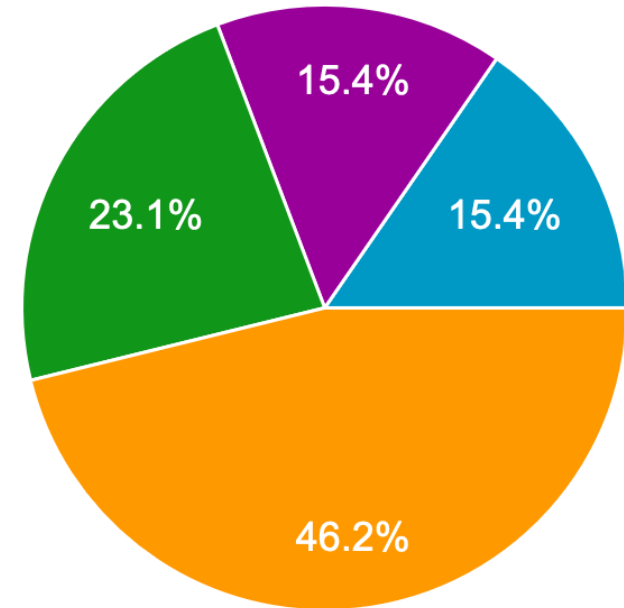
- 114 graduate courses (across 13 institutions)
- 5 thesis only programs; 8 provide options to both course + thesis programs
- U Victoria and Dalhousie have moved away from traditional course selections: “We don't follow the conventional area designations any longer, but have courses in Literature and ... Ethics, Religion, Place, Politics, Gender and Sexuality. Our courses cover most of those areas when taken in the aggregate.” (UVic)
- U Montréal doesn't distinguish by period but by field, e.g., “Literature and Medicine, Literature and the Planetary Imagination . . .”

MA students recommended time of completion versus actual



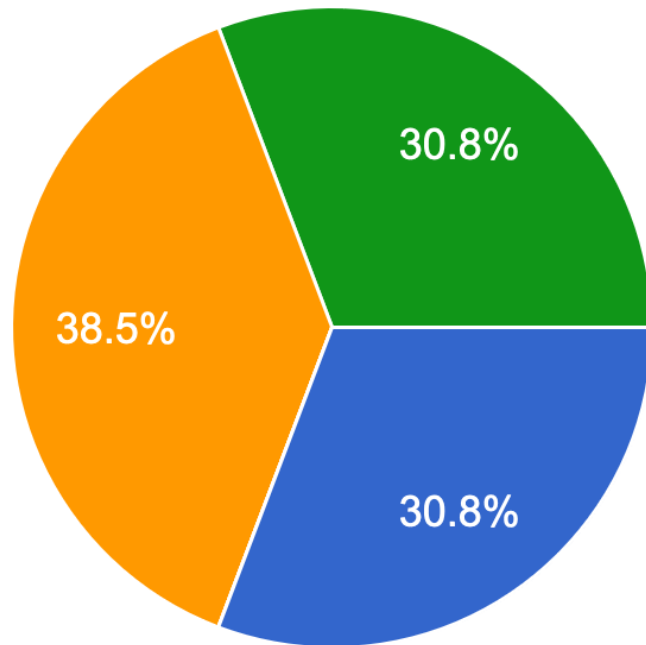
Recommended

- N/A No MA Program
- ~6 months
- ~12 months (1 year)
- ~18 months (1.5 years)
- ~24 months (2 years)
- ~30 months (2.5 years)
- ~36 months (3 years)
- ~42 months (3.5 years)



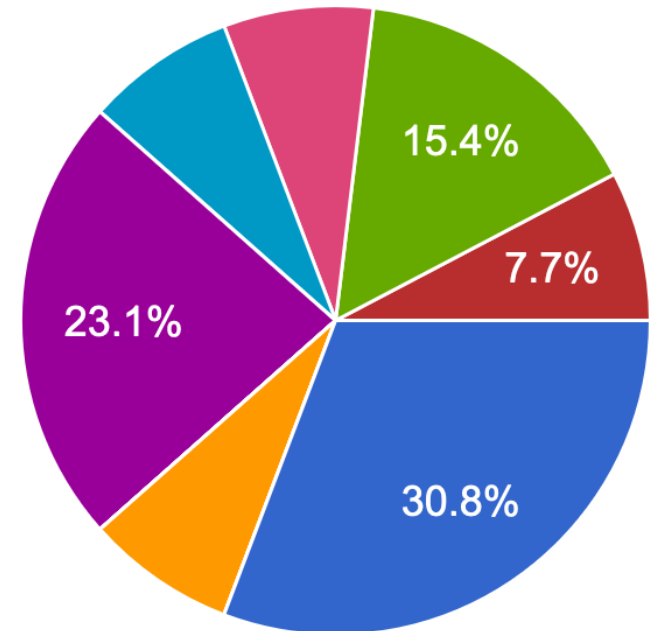
Actual

PhD students recommended time of completion versus actual



Recommended

- N/A No PhD Program
- ~24-36 months (2-3 years)
- ~48 months (4 years)
- ~60 months (5 years)
- ~66 months (5.5 years)
- ~72 months (6 years)
- ~78 months (6.5 years)
- ~84 months (7 years)
- ~90 months (7.5 years)
- ~96 months and over (8 years and over)



Actual

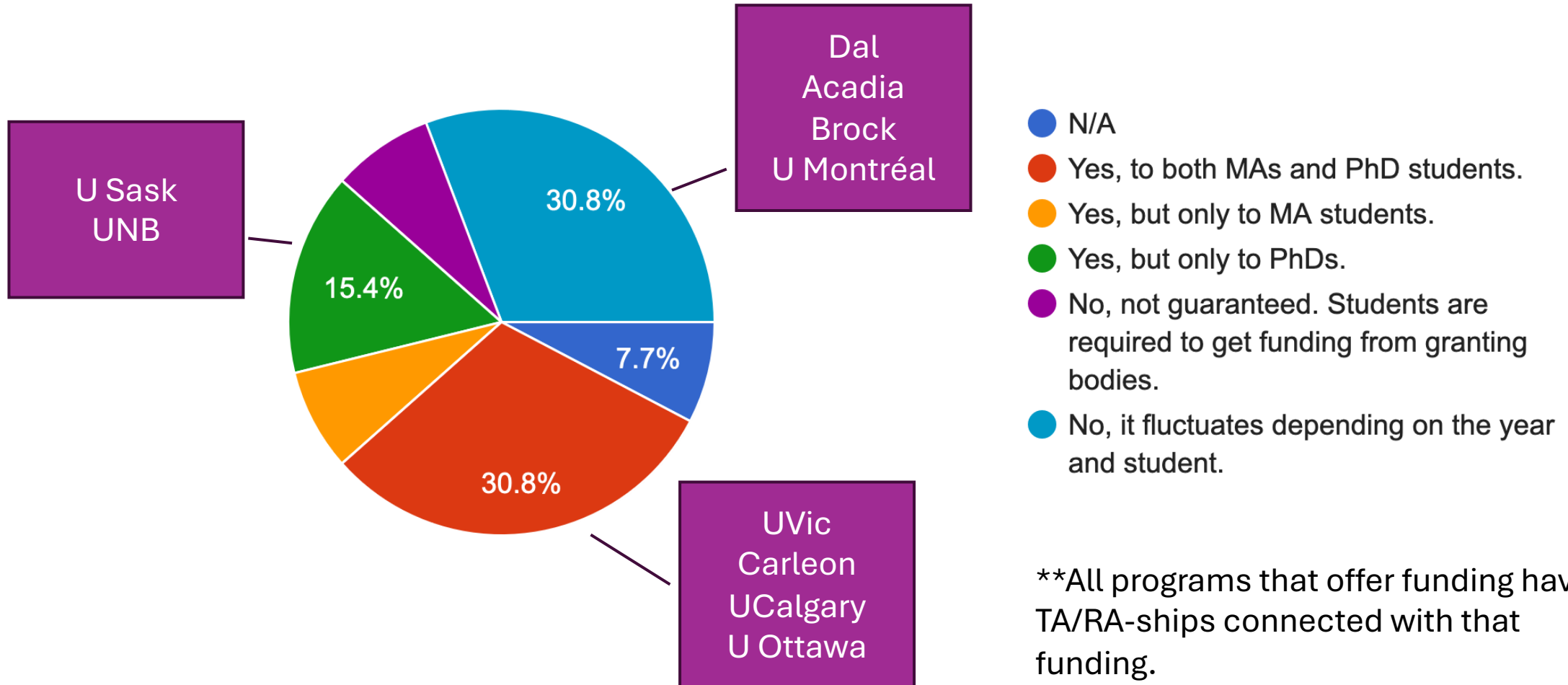
Takeaways

- Requirements for PhD completion vary widely across campuses:
 - Course requirements range from 4-7
- UNB requires a methods course & teaching apprenticeship
- U Montréal, UNB, U Ottawa, Dalhousie require multiple comprehensive exams
- UVic requires only 4 half courses but also a “candidacy portfolio”
- 8 of the 9 respondents with a PhD program have a second-language requirement

“Time to completion is a significant issue. [USask] are in the process of reworking the program so that the coursework shifts from 18cu to 15cu and instead of an Introduction to Textual Scholarship, students will take a Research Methods course geared to supporting discipline-specific skills practiced in coursework but directed towards other program requirements, such as the MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal.”

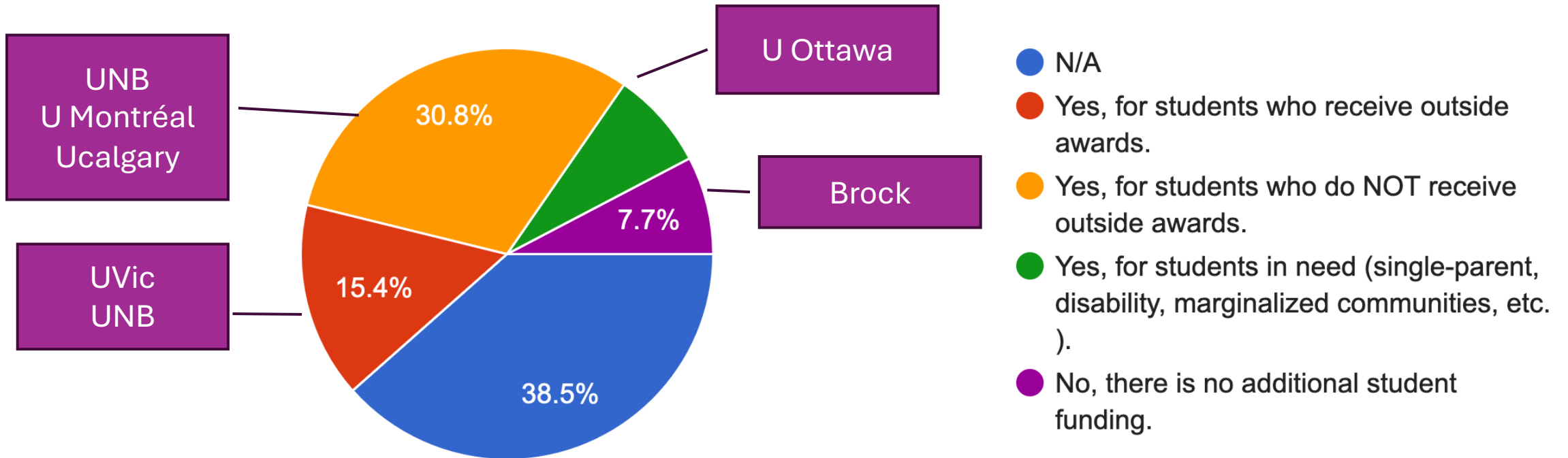
Is funding guaranteed to all graduate students for a set number of years?

13 responses



Are “top-up” awards offered for students?

13 responses



Funding Takeaways

- UOttawa has one of the more robust funding packages: \$78,500 over 4 years, and MAs with GPA over 9.0 are guaranteed work-funding (\$10,000 for one year only).
- Majority have TA/RA-ships as part of their funding packages.
- UMontréal provides PhD students funding for three years with a “fin d’études bourse” for the fourth year.
- Carleton, Dalhousie, USask, UMontréal, and UCalgary all provide the opportunity for graduate students to teach their own course. For Uvic and UOttawa, it depends on the year.
- All institutions provide partial funding for travel

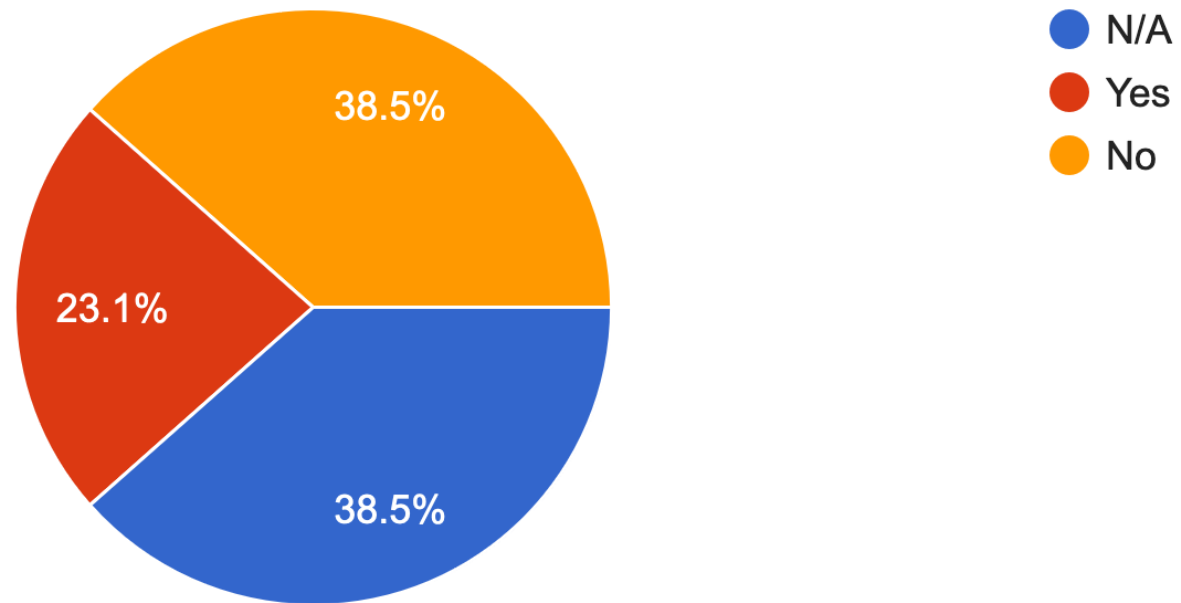
Tuition Chart for Respondents

	Tuition MA	Tuition PhD	International Student
Acadia (Wolfville)	\$2,499	--	~2x
Carleton	\$2,200 (per trimester)	\$2,200	~\$4,400 (~2x)
U of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon)	\$11,097 (per year?)	\$4,932 (per year?)	No international fees
U of New Brunswick (Fredrickton)	\$2,487	\$2,487	2x
Brock (St. Catherines)	\$2,725 (per trimester)	--	~\$9,000 (3x)
U de Montreal	\$2,022 (per trimester) \$5,077 (non-Quebec resident)	\$2,022	\$9,864 (~4x)
Dalhousie (Halifax)	\$3,124	\$1,554	No longer charges international fees
U of Northern BC (Prince George)	\$1,820 (\$2452 w/ fees)	--	~\$4,800 (~2x)
UVic	\$2,700	\$2,700	~\$5,400 (~2x)
U Ottawa	\$2,500	\$2,500	Doesn't charge international fees
U of Calgary	\$1,225 (Thesis) \$2,825 (Course-Based)	\$1,225 (Thesis)	~\$2,400 (~3x)
Trent (Peterborough)	\$2,250	--	~2.5x

***Cost of tuition per term or trimester where indicated

Do PhD students who reach candidacy pay reduced tuition (in other words, do ABDs pay less or the same)?

13 responses



2023 Cost of Living by City

***Prices calculated using Numbeo, institutions marked with an asterisk did not provide data in 2023

Institution	Rates	Hours	Work Over Hours (F/S)		Cost of Living by City Per Month
Acadia	\$15-20 ↓	12 ↑	No	--	\$1,952
Carleton	\$45-50	10	No	--	\$2,599
U of Saskatchewan	\$20-25	12	Yes	Yes	\$1,959
U of New Brunswick	\$25-30	6	No	--	\$1,792
Brock	\$25-30	10	No	Yes	\$2,162
U de Montreal	\$25-30	10	No	--	\$1,906
Dalhousie	\$30-35 ↑	10	Yes	--	\$2,346
*Laurier	\$25-30	10	--	Yes	\$2,446
U of Northern BC	\$25-30	10	No	No	\$1,974
UVic	\$30-35	8 ↓	Yes	No	\$2,638
*Lakehead	\$35-40	10	--	--	\$1,998
U of Calgary	\$40-45	12	Yes	No	\$2,560
*Western	\$45-50	10	--	Yes	\$2,562
Trent	\$20-25 ↓	10	Yes	Yes	\$2,345
U of Waterloo	\$45-50	10	No	--	\$2,425
U of Ottawa	\$55-60	20	Yes		\$2,599

Cost of living: avg. for 1 bedroom apt, groceries for 1, public transportation

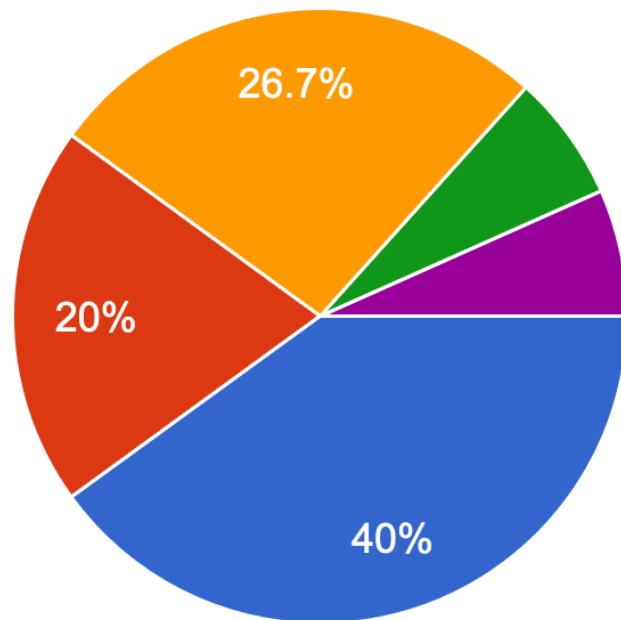
Institution	2022 **Provincial Average	2023 **City Average
Acadia (Wolfville)	NS = \$1,702	\$1,952
U of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon)	SK = \$1,332	\$1,959
U of New Brunswick (Fredericton)	NB = \$1,330	\$1,792
Brock (St. Catharines)	ON = \$2,234	\$2,162
U de Montreal	QB = \$1,056	\$1,906
Dalhousie (Halifax)	NS = \$1,702	\$2,346
Laurier (Waterloo)	ON = \$2,234	\$2,446
U of Northern BC (Prince George)	BC = \$1,935	\$1,974
U Victoria	BC = \$1,935	\$2,638
Lakehead (Thunder Bay)	ON = \$2,234	\$1,998
U Calgary	AB = \$1,969	\$2,560
Western (London)	ON = \$2,234	\$2,562
Trent (Peterborough)	ON = \$2,234	\$2,345
U of Waterloo	ON = \$2,234	\$2,425

Cost of Living Comparison by Year

“The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose **3.9%** on an annual average basis in 2023, following a 40-year high increase of 6.8% in 2022 and a 3.4% increase in 2021” (Statistics Canada 2024)

Based on your experience in the program, are students generally aware of their rights and privileges as students? As employees?

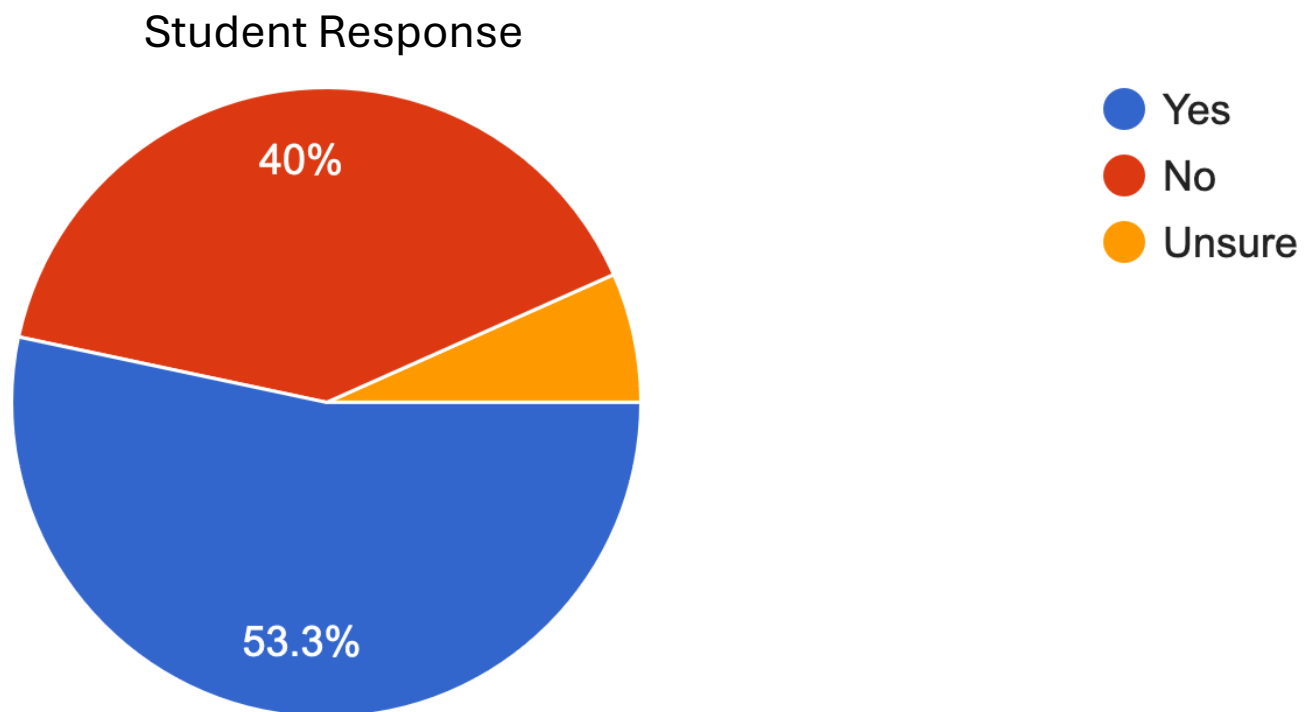
15 responses



- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- This depends greatly on their involvement in campus life -- we also just had a strike so awareness is higher than usual, I think.
- Mostly yes

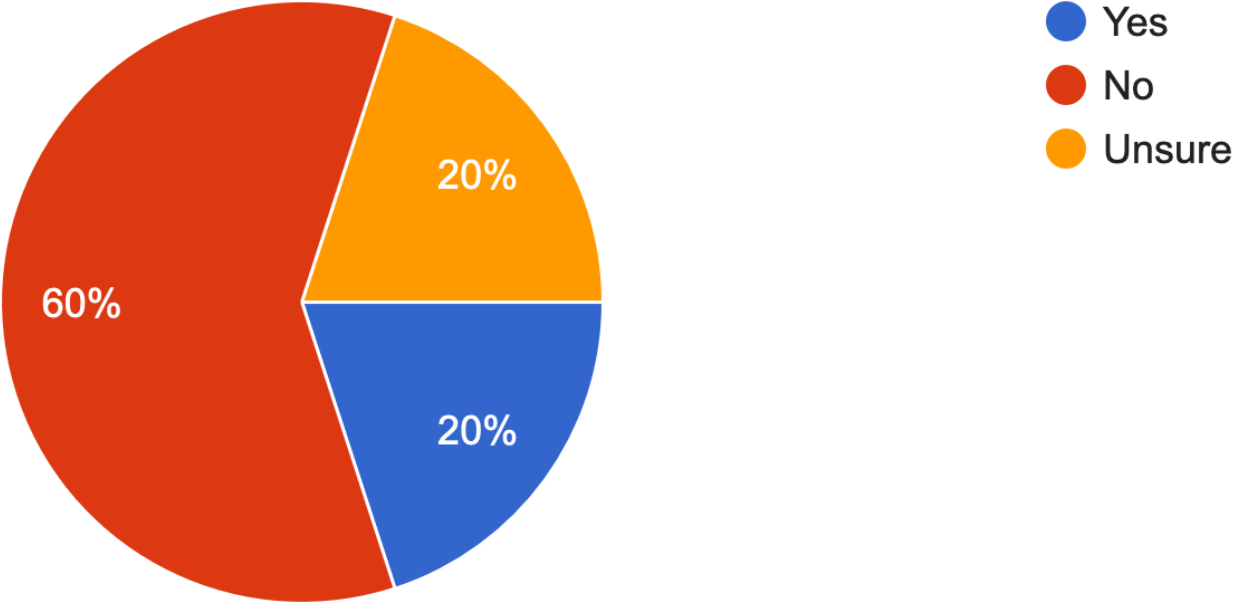
In your experience, do graduate students work more than their contracted hours or are asked to take on additional tasks not outlined in their contracts?

15 responses



On the whole, do you think your institution's mental health facilities are adequate for the needs of graduate students?

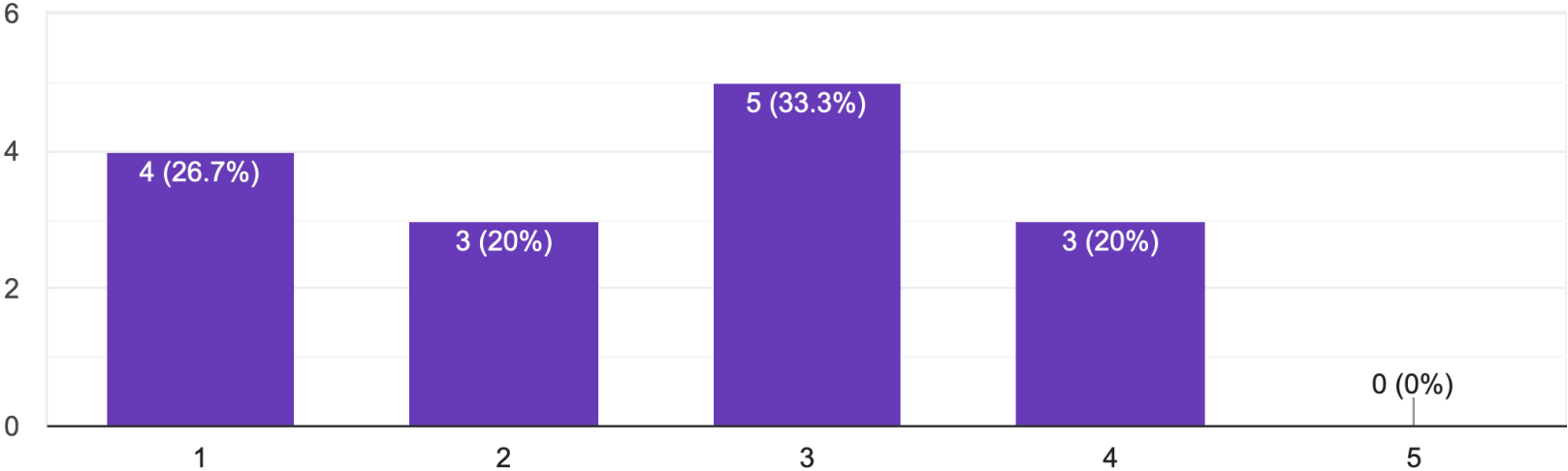
15 responses



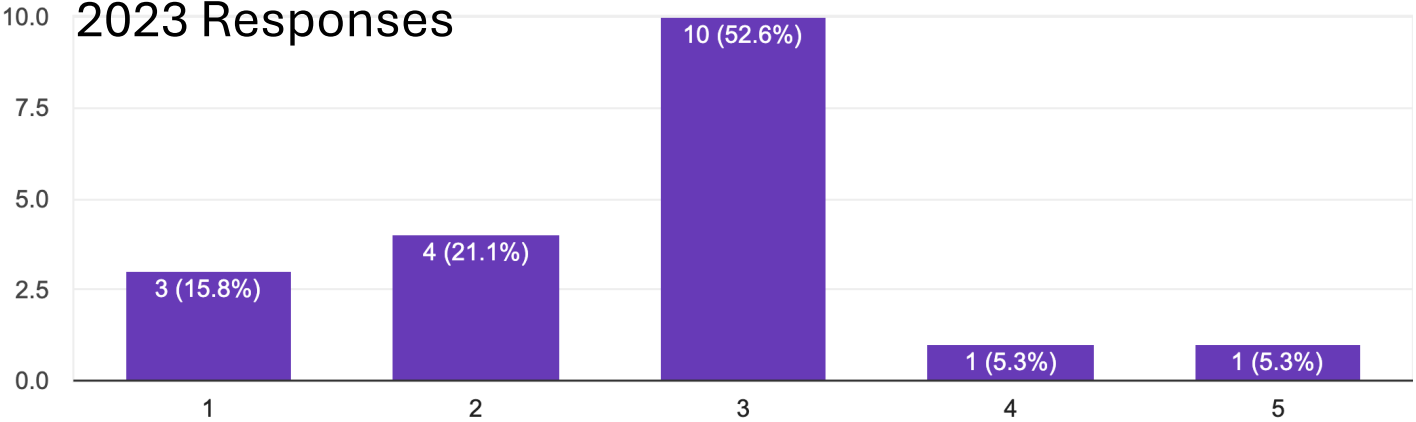
2024 Responses

How do you think your institution values your department in relations to other departments? (1 being low value, 5 being high value).

15 responses

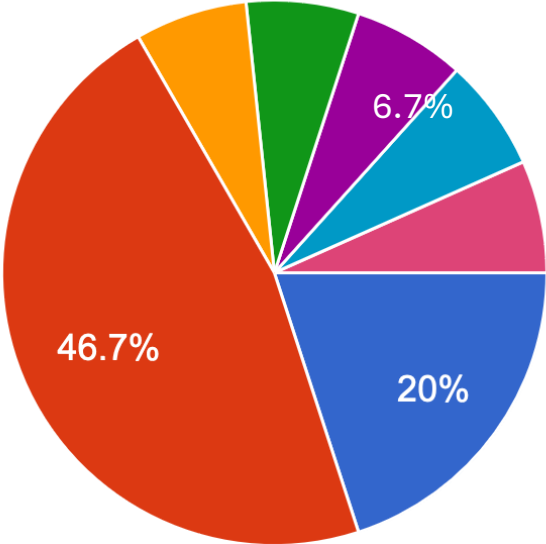


2023 Responses



Does your department offer workshops or a course that includes professionalization as a main component? Is it mandatory?

15 responses

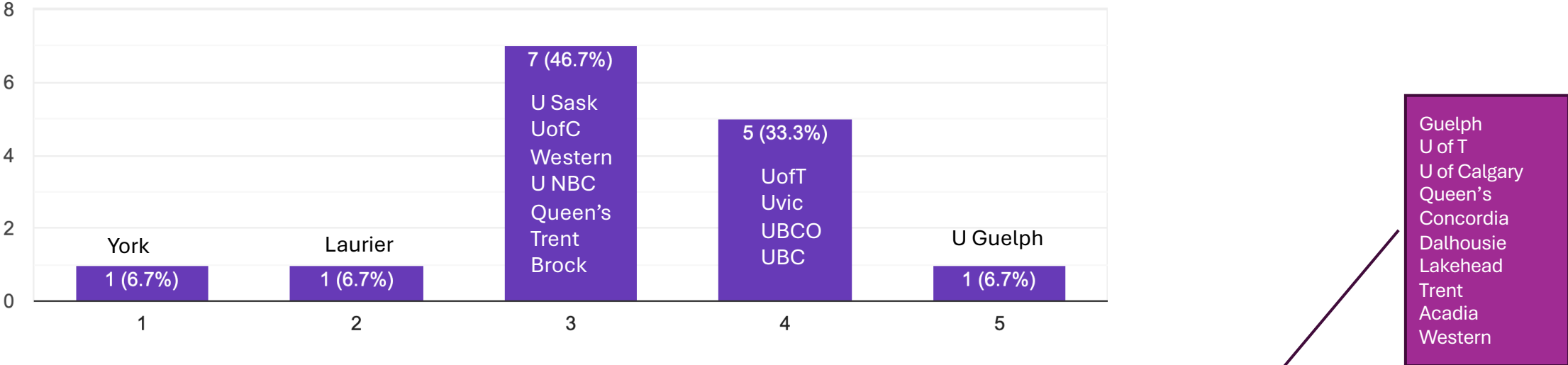


- Yes, a professionalization course is offered, but not mandatory.
- Yes, a professionalization course is offered, and it is mandatory.
- No, a professionalization course is not offered.
- professionalization workshops are offered and required for MA students
- It is mandatory but is not a course; 8 or so single sessions throughout the year.
- Several professionalization workshops are mandatory, but there is not a credit course.
- We are bringing back in some professionalization courses now, but it is a new endeavour. So far, not mandatory.

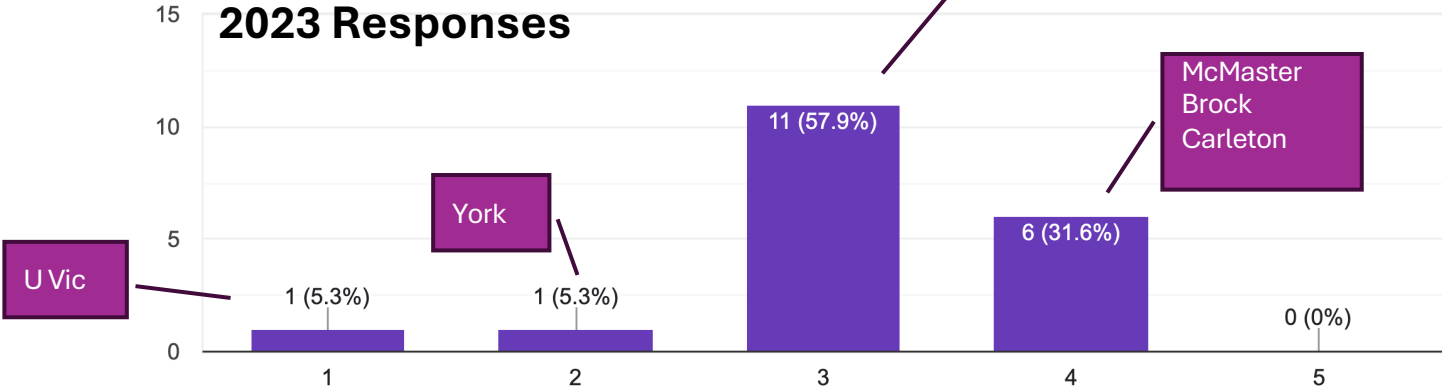
2024 Responses

In your opinion, please rate how effective you think your department's various efforts at student professionalization are as a whole (1 being very inadequate, 5 being very beneficial).

15 responses



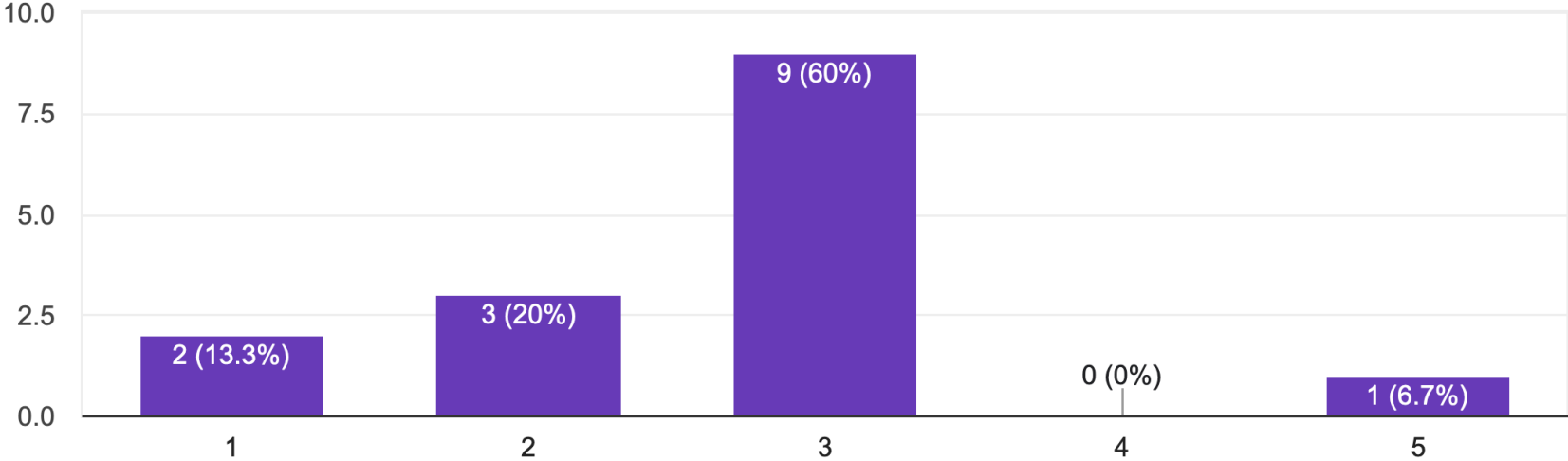
2023 Responses



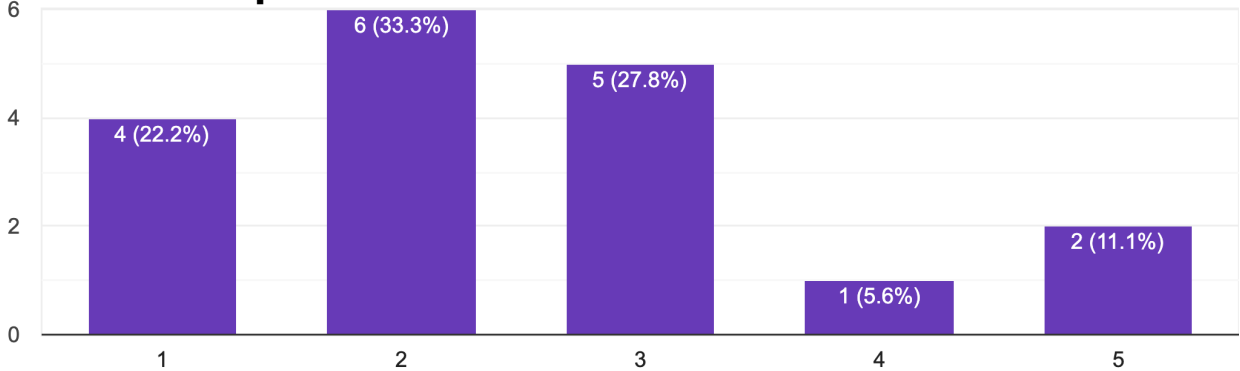
2024 Responses

In your opinion, please rate how you feel about your career prospects after graduate school (1 being very insecure, 5 being very confident).

15 responses



2023 Response



Professionalization

- Brock: “The other issue is the lack of training or professionalization regarding career paths for MAs (rather than PhDs), especially since Brock doesn't offer an English PhD; everyone in our cohort is an MA student and 4 (of 6) of us have chosen not to immediately pursue PhDs.”
- I think the department could simply put more effort into these opportunities—as it is, they seem to vary widely in quality and content based on the facilitator.
- Help students learn to publish. In a publish or perish environment, it is criminal how under-equipped most grads are to actually publish their work.
- Implement the mandatory course and value professionalization.
- Create courses that allow us to gain skills that will be useful on the job market (syllabus design, course design, internships, etc.)

Echoes Across Surveys

Comment from 2023:

- “Our department has many professors very hesitant to changes that student's and TA's have expressed.”

Comment from 2024:

- Western: “This year was a pivotal year at Western as our TAs bargained for a new collective agreement. We were on strike almost a month.”

Echoes Across Surveys

Comment from 2023:

- I think they focus too much on the impossibility of getting an academic job (since they used to act like there were jobs aplenty, now they've gone too far the other way)

Comment from 2024:

- “There have been some issues with regards to the balance between realism and defeatism in our professionalization courses; the students in the MA cohort aren't (and never were, even before the course) naive when it comes to the academic job market or the "hireability" of the English PhD, but there's a tendency to assume that we are, which has caused some (manageable) friction. However, with the exception of one faculty member, the faculty have been very receptive to our discussions about this issue.”

Changes Being Implemented

- UofT Student: “Upper year PhD students have been speaking is quite helpful, and the department seems invested in our career paths. . . . Department recently decided to remove its 4th/5th year Professional Development course, in favour of a series of workshops, though I'm not sure if this this was in response to/in line with student concerns. Our placement officer, who organizes the workshops, have found permanent positions at UofT, and two received postdoc fellowships.”
- USask Faculty: “Time to completion is a significant issue. We are in the process of reworking the program so that the coursework shifts from 18cu to 15cu and instead of an Introduction to Textual Scholarship, students will take a Research Methods course geared to supporting discipline-specific skills practiced in coursework but directed towards other program requirements, such as the MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal.”
- UOttawa Faculty: “But [lack of ability to allocate resources to students] is one of the reasons we're streamlining our doctoral program: to ensure that students are not in a cycle of having to take on non-academic work and thus / because they are taking more and more time to complete their degrees.”
- **UVic has changed its candidacy model in lieu of these types of issues.

Student comments

- “. . . the department has been vocal about decentering professorship as the surefire end for a PhD and pointing toward other professional avenues.”
- “We need more funding to support and more faculty members to take on these roles. At the moment, those who are filling the roles are handling too many positions with increasing budget cuts. Students and (select) staff are burning out as a result.”
- Develop a standardized set of workshops available to students every year. Update these workshops. Directly streamline students into professionalization workshops held by campus-wide staff (e.g., invite these staff to hold an English department-only version of their workshop so English students don't have to compete to sign up).
- Several students in the department have expressed need for the professionalization course to address a wider variety of topics and with more depth.
- A deeper understanding of equity and diversity, get more funding, and address BIPOC knowledges
- Limited opportunity for RA at the moment -- desire for increased RA funding. Wide variety of grad courses offered, limited access to creative writing courses.
- The department would benefit from hiring but some hiring requests have been stalled due to financial issues with the institution and restructuring
- ACCUTE connecting with students more could be very helpful!

Some Takeaways

- Funding is quite low and continues to be reduced at the same time students living costs are increasing. There seems to be an implicit correlation between longer times to graduate/complete the degree students and additional work requirements that students are being forced to undertake.
 - Some institutions are making changes to attempt to offset this imbalance! Are they working? What institutional changes need to be made to ensure these degrees retain value for students?
- It's quite difficult to assess diversity in faculty and course selection—going forward we need to consider questions that would allow for a better survey of faculty and diversity within institutions. 85% of institutions have EDI models—how can we assess their effectiveness/implementation?
- Student funding and sessional teaching work is the first to get slashed across English departments and professionalization opportunities are limited, not to mention inconsistent in application and efficacy.
 - How can institutions create coherent and relevant professionalization practices as part of the degree program? Can changes to the structure of degree programs help support students in both their academic and career goals?

Thank you