

ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN DEANS OF EDUCATION

GENERAL ACCORD



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GENERAL ACCORD

Overview

The Association of Canadian Deans of Education developed the General Accord to represent the agreement of the signatories to work together in advancing education in Canada based on the goals, values, and principles articulated here. By signing the General Accord, deans, directors, and chairs of education add to ACDE's institutional capacity to advocate for positive change in public education in Canada. Those signing the General Accord become part of a network with shared commitments and values relative to education and are contributing to national, public discourse on the importance of public education in developing and sustaining a civil society.

The General Accord represents the first stage in an ongoing relationship among universities and university-colleges in Canada that are publicly funded or are members of AUCC, and that offer initial teacher education. Future stages are envisioned as accords on principles in specific areas of interest, the first such document being the Accord on the Principles of Initial Teacher Education. Areas of interest for further accords might be graduate education, continuing professional education, teacher mobility and the portability of credentials, and Indigenous education, among others. Those signing the General Accord do so as a public commitment to solidarity with it. Deans, directors, and chairs of education who sign the General Accord are not required to sign or support other accords, but may still choose to participate in the activities mentioned below. Institutions or bodies that are not eligible to sign the General Accord but who are in agreement with its principles will be eligible to sign the subsequent accords.

The General Accord will promote and support a range of activities among its signatories, including advocating for increased public investment and involvement in education; constructing accords; developing partnering opportunities; sharing institutional data; advocating for research on education; and promoting knowledge access for educators and the public.

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A Pan-Canadian Accord

The Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE), an association of the deans, directors, and chairs of university faculties, schools, colleges, and departments of education, meets periodically to exchange information on developments within their institutions and across Canada. ACDE has made significant strides toward the systematic collection of data in areas of shared interest, and the sponsorship of selected research initiatives directed at obtaining a pan-Canadian perspective, and the development of a network of institutions and bodies with shared commitments and values.

Members of ACDE have come to a shared understanding of what the General Accord is, what it might do for its signatories, and how it might intersect with other agreements and statutes governing education. The consensus was built with input from representatives of both official languages, from small and large institutions, from all of Canada's regions. Within the framework of the General Accord, the signatories demonstrate a willingness to pursue reciprocal relationships involving information exchange, advocacy, and agency.

The Canadian Context

ACDE represents those responsible for university-based initial and post-initial preparation of professional educators and much of the education research and scholarship in Canada. Members are committed to the enhancement of initial and post-initial teacher education programs and educational research in universities and university-colleges throughout Canada that are publicly funded or members of AUCC. Their mission is to foster high quality educational programs, including initial teacher education, set within a pan-Canadian framework.

It is ACDE's view that Canadian faculties, schools, colleges, and departments of education are in the best position to prepare professional educators for the diversity of Canadian classrooms. Teachers are primary conveyors of society's civic cultures and their preparation must attend to these attitudes and values, as well as relevant content knowledge. ACDE supports Canadian faculties, schools, colleges, and departments of education for the specific reasons that they are nested within their communities and that by and large they have a history of engagement with local, provincial, and national educational communities.

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Constitutionally, education in Canada is the responsibility of the provinces and territories. There are at present a few national or pan-Canadian groups concerned with education, such as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, the Canadian Education Association, the Canadian Association of School Administrators, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and the Canadian Association of Principals, among others. While not wishing to interfere with the prerogatives of these groups, deans, directors, and chairs of education nevertheless feel the need to speak with a pan-Canadian voice to achieve, maintain, and advocate for commonly held professional goals across institutions. The General Accord provides the means to do so.

The context of education within each province and territory is unique from linguistic, cultural, historical, economic, and social contexts. ACDE has no wish to impose a system of national standards that would erode the important local and regional characteristics of initial teacher education or education more broadly. Indeed we must resist all efforts to homogenize or standardize education. It is certainly the case that whether or not deans, directors, and chairs of education sign this General Accord, the provinces and territories will remain responsible for education in their jurisdictions. However, there is clearly room for joint action. The Canadian deans, directors, and chairs of education believe that their collective commitment to work together will create a synergy that will benefit each province and territory as well as the country as a whole.

Vision

ACDE's vision for a pan-Canadian accord involves a network of reciprocal relationships, both with signatories and with other groups concerned with education in Canada. Among its members, the General Accord affords recognition and review, exchange and transaction, reciprocity and respect. Consistent with accords in other professions, members exchange information, explore principles to guide the advancement of the education professions, and examine institutional processes, policies, and procedures for their education programs. They also support research in teacher education by initiating research studies on issues of relevance to professional educators in Canada.

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In addition to these activities, signatories of the General Accord advocate for increased public funding of and engagement in public education. The value of a pan-Canadian network of deans, directors, and chairs of education acting in concert to shape public policy cannot be overstated. One of the goals of the General Accord is to create a public discourse around the shaping of Canadian society and the crucial role of public education. By promoting the importance of public education and encouraging investment in it (investment in terms of funding, research, and human resources, among others), ACDE General Accord signatories hope to develop an engaged, responsible public that demands quality and mobilizes resources to educate all Canadians.

In establishing a web of relationships with governments, agencies, and professional organizations concerned with education such as national and provincial teachers' associations, the General Accord will facilitate information sharing and cooperative research within a framework that respects the diversity of Canada's regions and educational contexts. The strength of the network will ensure that close connections are developed and supported; its flexibility will allow for differing levels of involvement.

Principles

The General Accord:

- Is open to deans, directors, and chairs of faculties, schools, colleges, and departments of education situated within Canadian universities and university-colleges that are publicly funded or are members of AUCC.
- Respects the diversity of programs that have been developed to serve a diverse Canadian population. It supports important local and regional characteristics of initial teacher education and education more broadly.
- Recognizes institutional autonomy, regional differences, and provincial prerogative over educational policy and practice.

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Goals

Education is the cornerstone of human development. To support that notion, ACDE expresses its commitment to pan-Canadian leadership in professional and teacher education, educational research, and policy in universities and university-colleges. The ACDE General Accord establishes the following as goals:

- to identify and address national issues in education especially those involving initial teacher education;
- to develop a robust, focused, and informed national consciousness about education;
- to engage representatives of provincial and federal governments, Indigenous communities, agencies, national and provincial teachers' associations, and educational research groups in dialogue about the development of pan-Canadian principles for initial teacher education, graduate education, and continuing professional education, among other areas;
- to encourage national, provincial, and regional alliances among faculties, schools, colleges, and departments of education, in order to influence education policy;
- to promote the funding, recognition, and dissemination of educational research, particularly as it pertains to teacher education and teaching practices in schools;
- to foster pan-Canadian recognition of initial teacher education programs, while respecting institutional autonomy and differentiated programs that take into account regional and cultural diversity;
- to facilitate pan-Canadian mobility of university students and teachers;
- to support thoughtful, considered, and deliberate innovation to improve and strengthen the preparation of educators nationally;
- to affirm the essential collaboration between university and school system grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning; and
- to create inter- and intra-provincial linkages and strengthen partnerships around teacher education, graduate education, and continuing professional education programs.

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Activities Open to Signatories

The General Accord asserts that education, particularly public education, prepares learners of all ages for meaningful participation in a democratic and civil society. In support of this notion, ACDE promotes a range of optional activities for General Accord signatories, including:

- participating in an ongoing dialogue about public education;
- advocating for increased public investment and involvement in education;
- constructing Principles documents and pursuing conversations around the ramifications of such principles with appropriate groups;
- developing partnering opportunities;
- sharing institutional data;
- advocating for research into teacher education;
- promoting knowledge access for the academy and the public; and
- developing program recognition.



The General Accord was ratified at the annual meeting of the Association of Canadian Deans of Education in 2005, and was launched at the annual conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education in 2006.

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