



Internationalization practices in Quebec universities

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The Université de Montréal (UdeM) has an internationalization policy designed to increase the recruitment of international students, encourage students to participate in international exchanges and, more generally, develop mechanisms to foster international research and teaching partnerships. At the faculty career level, the term “outreach and networking,” rather than internationalization per se, is used to refer to collaboration with colleagues at various universities, participation in international conferences or seminars, and involvement in academic associations or on editorial boards of national or international journals. Outreach and networking thus not only embrace a wide range of activities but also emphasize collaboration as well as recognition in various spheres of academic life.

This broad understanding of outreach and networking means that there is a great deal of flexibility in how UdeM researchers like me apply this standard, depending on their researcher profiles. For example, if our work is in the field of Canadian politics, it is normal for outreach and networking to include a considerable amount of Canadian work and related collaboration. When we apply for career advancement, we can explain the specificities of our research questions and field of study and thus, justify our choice of collaborators.

In practical terms, the effort expected from each researcher varies according to their university rank. According to the UdeM’s regulations on career advancement norms and criteria (*Règlement concernant les normes d’appui aux critères de promotion de l’Université de Montréal*), assistant professors are expected to place more emphasis on developing their teaching and research and less on outreach. Associate professors are expected to demonstrate personal outreach by contributing to the development of their discipline. In the case of full professors, outreach is understood as a recognition of the quality of their international contribution combined with and

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a commitment to various administrative tasks at the university. Applications for full professorships are thus not evaluated in terms of quantity of activities or publications, but rather in terms of qualitative recognition insofar as all their publications are evaluated by four researchers outside Quebec. The role of these assessors is to evaluate the candidates' scientific contributions, which implicitly includes outreach. The regulations also leave some leeway in candidacies so that the specificities of each discipline can be taken into account. There is also no defined list of journals in which one should publish, nor defined standards concerning the number of published articles.

All the same, younger colleagues feel themselves under enormous pressure. This is particularly apparent when they are hired. Publication numbers are becoming higher, which reflects strong competition within an ever-growing pool of researchers hoping to obtain tenure. Over time, the hiring of young faculty with an already advanced degree of professionalization will likely raise each discipline's informal set of standards for evaluating career advancement.

In general, research funding rules and programs significantly influence how UdeM professors operate. Given that Canada has its federal research granting agencies and Quebec has its provincial counterparts, the key objective in the social sciences is to obtain grants primarily from the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) or the provincial Fonds de recherche du Québec—Société et culture (FRQSC) or both. Grant applications can be written in English or French, and most of an applicant's research budget must be devoted to training students and pursuing research.

UdeM helps newly hired professors to obtain these grants in various ways such as course releases for the first few years to avoid a full course load and access to internal funds to cover attendance at international conferences. These small grants enable these professors to become familiar with the profession and develop networking and research strategies.

The funding agencies also have several types of programs, some of which are exclusively for young researchers. Since the beginning of my academic career, I have noticed a strong diversification of these funding programs in terms of a greater diversity of research projects (particularly of a partnership nature) and an emphasis on funding new research projects as well as the dissemination of their findings (through programs dedicated solely to dissemination such as conferences, podcasts, training and so on).

Historically, the FRQSC and its sister organizations in the sciences were created to allow researchers in Quebec universities to build up their portfolio and thus, do better in federal granting agency competitions, including those SSHRC. Most FRQSC programs are infrastructure programs, i.e., they fund research teams and networks. This support is extremely helpful in funding numerous dissemination and networking activities. For example, I belong to an urban studies network called Villes Régions Monde [Cities, Regions, Worlds], which has raised the profile of its members' work since its inception in 2003. On a personal level, I can regularly turn to this network to fund trips or the revision of texts in English, or provide help in organizing local or international conferences. I am also part of the Collectif de recherche Action Politique et Démocratie (CAPED) [Democracy and Political



Action research group], which also supports my projects either as the sole researcher or with other researchers. However, not every researcher belongs to one or more teams or networks.

As a researcher who benefits from a generous public research funding system, I find it difficult to ignore the need to contribute to my own society. This includes publishing in French, a meaningful consideration in a language minority society such as Quebec within Canada. It is thus especially important to create course materials in French for undergraduate courses at UdeM, which values its status as a Francophone university and where courses are given almost exclusively in French. Given the increasing enrollment of international students in our courses, this concern has taken on added importance since many of these students have not had prior access to training in English. Unfortunately, publication in French is still limited in the sense that while texts written in other Francophone countries are useful, they are often not written for readers unfamiliar with the society and political life of the country covered. Furthermore, publications from Quebec and other parts of Canada written in French on subjects pertaining to these countries or elsewhere often do not adequately cover all the topics addressed in a particular course.

In my role as a researcher, language is a constant preoccupation that demands a balance in my publication strategy that involves mostly publishing in English while not neglecting my publications in French. The capacity to publish relevant, high-quality papers was also an important motivation in my becoming in 2020 the editor of *Politique et sociétés*, the only Francophone political science journal in North America. This journal publishes Francophone research from around the world (39% of our authors are non-Quebecers). The journal must meet several objectives: respond to the demands of an international Francophone audience but also remain relevant to Quebec society and our researcher community, bearing mind that some research may be extremely interesting to Quebec society but hardly resonate at all internationally. For each issue, this means ensuring representative Canadian content in each issue, by including a minimum number of Canadian authors or by having texts that deal with Quebec or Canadian policy issues.

The logic of increasing internationalization in the discipline of political science should not overshadow researchers who promote a form of re-localization. Canadian grant applications now include knowledge mobilization plans that extend the impact of the funded research outside academe. This includes more popularized dissemination in many forms (e.g., blogs, podcasts, training guides and feedback seminars) as well as explorations of how the research findings will contribute to our teaching. This research strategy no longer relies solely on valuing the importance of publishing scientific articles in the most highly rated journals, but rather envisages a combination of contributions at either the societal or international level and either inside or outside academe. At the level of individual careers, this new norm legitimizes expected spin-offs in French, diversifies modes of dissemination, and values a variety of researcher profiles. Since I research participatory democracy and urban policy, especially in Canada, the local anchoring of my research is more evident. This is part of the ethos to some extent. I am often asked to speak on various societal issues and, over time, I have learned to define research agendas anchored in my society,



while still contributing to scientific discussion in a broader international context. I now embrace and enjoy this dual objective in my research projects. However, in terms of research productivity expectations, this diversity of dissemination comes with risks when participating in the competitions of granting agencies for whom volume and caliber of academic publications remain the most important criterion.

Internationalization also comes with significant environmental costs that we are only beginning to discuss as a community of researchers. On this front, granting agencies also play an important role with both the SSHRC and the FRQSC allowing research budgets to include carbon offsetting for air travel or other means of transportation. Like some other universities, UdeM has published a guide to environmentally responsible travel and encourages its staff to report their trips so that the university can calculate the carbon balance of its activities. However, these tools continue to be simply incentives and are not mandatory.

The challenge for Quebec researchers like me is that Quebec is a relatively small society located within a much larger territory. To ensure the quality of our research and to avoid being isolated, we need to engage with other researchers. Within eight hours by plane from Europe, South America and the rest of North America, we are geographically well positioned to participate in networks and a wide range of events in these regions. However, even though the need to travel is high, this geography does not serve us well on the energy conservation front, given that limiting ourselves to train travel or short trips severely restricts networking. Beyond New York, Boston or Toronto, European networks have always been central for Quebec researchers because these networks implicitly recognize and value cultural diversity. According to responses to a survey, in 2017–18, UdeM professors each traveled an average of 7.1 times and a total distance of 33,000 km that year. Of these trips, 2.3 were made in Quebec, 1.3 to another Canadian province and 3.5 internationally, mostly to Europe and the USA (Arsenault et al. 2019). Another publication from the same study shows that if UdeM researchers wanted to stay within Canadian average emissions per person per year while traveling that much for work, they would have to reduce their CO₂ emissions from all their other personal or professional activities to zero—clearly an impossible task (Talbot and Arsenault 2019).

At the departmental level, more and more colleagues are requesting collective discussions on reconciling the climate issue with research and internationalization activities. While virtual meetings are a new possibility, they better suit academics who already have established networks and are more advanced in their careers. So, the question arises: should we have different standards as a group, depending on where individual members are in their careers? In order to define new practices, there seems to be a need for flexible ethical standards and not rigid ones that would ignore the diversity of research situations.

In short, the combined effect of Quebec and Canadian funding practices and UdeM regulations is to establish relatively flexible standards for outreach and help the university's researchers to meet them. In other words, there is a generally favorable institutional context. Instead, the issue revolves more around how the profession is currently practiced and how it is evolving. Young colleagues are subject to considerable pressure to develop a publications and outreach track record that makes them 'eligible' to apply for a limited number of positions in a context where the number



of PhD candidates is growing. It is this entry into the academic inner circle that makes the informal obligation of outreach particularly important. Moreover, once one has obtained a higher academic position, the capacity for outreach is unevenly distributed, depending on administrative and teaching loads that vary from one professor to another based on relatively well-defined criteria and practices. However, that is another issue for another time...

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