

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Canadian Studies partnership in the United Kingdom**

The study of Canada has long been a feature of the British academic scene, but the pattern of teaching and research was largely fragmented until the 1970s when Canadian Studies became a recognised field of academic study in Britain. Several developments in the 1970s led to Canadian Studies being formally established in the UK. A colloquium was held in 1971 to discuss Canada-UK relations and what could be done to strengthen the bilateral relationship in the context of the magnetic continental pull affecting each country, as Britain prepared to join the European Community, and Canadian economic ties within North America were becoming stronger.<sup>1</sup> One idea mooted at the colloquium was that a Chair in Canadian Studies be founded at a British university. The then Canadian High Commissioner in London, the Hon. Jake Warren, took the initiative to establish a Foundation for Canadian Studies in the UK to raise funds to support this. In 1975 in a separate but linked initiative, a group of academics with Canadian interests founded the British Association for Canadian Studies, an academic network for individuals interested in Canada. Finally, the Government of Canada began to support Canadian Studies abroad, and the position of Academic Relations Officer at the Canadian High Commission in London was established in 1977.

Thus was set in place a partnership between the two funders of Canadian Studies in the UK – the Government of Canada and the Foundation for Canadian Studies – and the academic association which is the subject of this study, which has continued for over 30 years. Canadian Studies in the UK is today among the strongest in the world, and arguably is the programme with the most depth and diversity in Europe.

The Foundation for Canadian Studies in the United Kingdom was constituted by Trust Deed in 1974, with the object of education of the public about Canada and to raise private sector funding to promote the study of Canada at British universities. The initial capital of the Foundation was contributed by numerous companies, both Canadian companies with interests in Britain, and British companies with interests in Canada, and from the Government of Canada. The Foundation is run by a Board consisting of senior business people, bankers, academics, and the head of the London Bureau of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Government of Canada's interest in supporting Canadian Studies abroad flowed from the emerging Canadian national identity in the 1950s and 1960s that gave rise to the desire to promote Canada's image, culture and values internationally. Through the study of Canada, students would gain a knowledge and understanding of Canada which they would carry with them into their future work in business, education, government, the media and other occupations. Thus, there would be a more mature and sympathetic understanding of Canada in the United Kingdom, which would be to the benefit of Canada, and strengthen the bilateral relationship between Britain and Canada. The promotion of academic links, student exchanges and scholarly collaboration between British and Canadian universities would further enhance bilateral ties.

The Government of Canada currently spends \$250,000 a year to support teaching and research principally through Centres of Canadian Studies and the British Association for Canadian Studies and its specialist groups, as well as conferences, postgraduate travel, and collaboration between British and Canadian universities. The Foundation for Canadian Studies similarly dispenses around \$250,000 annually. The two funding partners work in close collaboration to ensure continuity and cohesiveness. It is estimated that the funding provided by the Government of Canada and the Foundation for Canadian Studies leverages nine times that amount in terms of university overheads, salaries, and the personal time committed by the more than 300 British academics who

teach and research Canada and organise conferences, field trips to Canada, student and staff exchanges, and collaboration with Canadian counterparts.

This report considers the development of Canadian Studies in the UK through the history and activities of one of the three partners in this collaborative endeavour, the British Association for Canadian Studies. The two main funders of the Canadian Studies Program in the UK are not considered here in detail. Information about the Government of Canada's world-wide Canadian Studies Program is available at [www.cdnstudies.ca](http://www.cdnstudies.ca), and through the web site of the International Council for Canadian Studies who administer many of the Government of Canada programmes, [www.iccs-ciec.ca](http://www.iccs-ciec.ca). Information about the Foundation for Canadian Studies in the UK is available at [www.canadian-studies-uk.org](http://www.canadian-studies-uk.org).

### **Defining the Sustained Studies agenda**

The Sustained Studies project was conceived as an overall review of Canadian Studies activities throughout the United Kingdom. It became evident during preliminary consultations that a full history of Canadian Studies would be too large a project to be undertaken in this form, and this therefore concentrates upon the central aspect of these activities, the British Association for Canadian Studies. The British Association for Canadian Studies has become firmly established at the hub of Canadian Studies in the United Kingdom, acting as a central location for communications and a source of Canadian Studies activities while maintaining continuous contacts with the various University-based programmes and activities. Moreover, as can be seen from the discussion below, those involved in these activities have been incorporated in the design of this research through the accounts of their role in Canadian Studies events, the regular activities of the British Association for Canadian Studies and their contributions to the specialist groups.

As important nodes of Canadian Studies activity the Centres and programmes have made their contributions from differing structural bases. Thus the University of Edinburgh Centre of Canadian Studies functioned primarily as a very small departmental-style unit engaged in specific undergraduate teaching of named Canadian Studies courses. At Queen's University Belfast, Birkbeck College London, and the University of Birmingham, the Centres of Canadian Studies were less formally structured arrangements which drew upon interests of academic staff across diverse departments. The University of Leeds also drew staff from across a range of departments, and possessed a formal structure including a constitution ratified by Senate, elections to its executive committee, annual general meetings, and the election of a Director and Deputy Director whose posts must be approved by Senate. At Cambridge, Hull and Nottingham Universities, what was termed a Canadian Studies programme essentially consisted of one junior academic post, although as at Hull, for example, it often involved other staff in the university. Both Belfast and Edinburgh organised much of their activity around an annual conference. While the Edinburgh conference set out to become a meeting point for British and Canadian academics, the emphasis in Belfast was upon outreach to the community in close association with the University's Extra-Mural programme. Given the divisions in Northern Irish society, a programme that emphasised and analysed the nature of Canada's bicultural society represented a worthwhile contribution to Ulster life. However, the basic point remains: because each manifestation of Canadian Studies was shaped in relation to the culture and requirements of the host institution, it is difficult for any outsider to attempt an overall assessment of the local impact of each one. Concentration upon the national and collective organisation of the British Association for Canadian Studies offers a framework for examining the relationships of various Canadian Studies endeavours both to one another and to external supporting agencies. Other programmes and agencies involved in Canadian Studies are discussed insofar as they impinge upon the activities and development of BACS.

Canadian Studies in the UK is a multi-disciplinary subject that provides an international perspective, challenging whatever tendencies there might be towards insularity, and offering sources of positive reference points for economic, social, political and cultural analysis. Canadian Studies does not necessarily lead to comparisons: interpretation and analysis of Canada's literature, history, legislation and of Canada's place in international relations (for example) can stand well alone. However, the UK context provided by BACS sometimes leads Canadian Studies specialists to develop comparative analysis. Thus, Canadian Studies becomes a multi-layered and multi-dimensional area of scholarship which generates further study and complex research questions.

The main aims of the BACS Sustained Studies Project are to examine the development of Canadian Studies in the UK and the networks that have developed during the existence of, and through the activities of, the British Association for Canadian Studies. BACS has operated as a hub for many of these activities, but while the broad canopy of the Association's activities provide a structure for regular events which bring together most of the public with an interest in the study of Canada, additional work is done, as in any professional association, by the small specialist groups that exist within the discipline. These are discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Development and change in Higher Education: opportunities and constraints for Canadian Studies**

Changes in higher education during the existence of the British Association for Canadian Studies have led to substantial increases in student numbers, growth and merger of higher education institutions, changes in status, and frequent internal re-structuring to create larger and commonly more multi-disciplinary working units. While some of these changes have led to a potential increase in student contact with Canadian Studies, others have, directly and indirectly, made the context for continuing with Canadian Studies activity more difficult.

When BACS was founded in 1975 there were about 700,000 students in higher education in the UK. In 2005 there were about 2,200,000. There has been growth of student numbers, and therefore of the largest potential public for Canadian Studies, in all levels within higher education. The postgraduate sector, especially postgraduate (MA/MSc) courses with students with an occupational or professional orientation has grown through the willingness of students to fund their own postgraduate education in order to enhance their career prospects. Government policy is to continue expanding student numbers in higher education but despite recent changes in funding this will probably be within a framework of efforts to continue lowering its unit cost.

There have been substantial changes in the popularity of some areas of undergraduate student recruitment in recent years. Changes in FTE numbers (home students; excluding FTE and international students) for selected subject areas for the period 1999–00 to 2003–04 have been as follows:

**Table 1:** Changes in FTE numbers in higher education by selected subjects, 1999–00 to 2003–04 (%)

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Business and Management Studies	2
Earth, Marine and Environmental Science	-10
Geography	-2
Health and Community Studies	37
Humanities	1
Psychology and Behavioural Sciences	27
Social Studies	10
Sports Science and Leisure Studies	31

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Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

The Higher Education Statistics Agency notes that these data are derived from evidence about student activity at modular level, they do not record student numbers on named degrees.

While higher education has been expanding, some areas within it have been losing student numbers or have been in a state of relative decline. Some subjects that have traditionally included Canadian Studies at undergraduate level, such as French, Geography and History have not shared in the expansion of higher education to the same extent as psychology and business studies. Sociology however has sustained a relatively strong position in undergraduate recruitment and English remains very buoyant.

If we consider Higher Education Statistics Agency data on full-time higher education students at undergraduate level for the academic year 2003–04, by subject of study, we find the following:

**Table 2:** Undergraduate Student Numbers 2003-04 by Subject of Study

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Full-time undergraduate student numbers</i>
Law	47245
Psychology	35850
Politics	17965
Sociology	22445
Human and social geography	9905
Business studies	67785
Management studies	28370
Media studies	21275
English studies	38795
History by period	25835
History by area	725
American studies	3860
French studies	7510

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

It is clear from these data on current student numbers and student preferences that Canadian Studies as a complete degree programme or degree scheme would probably not recruit many students. Within the framework of modular programmes in English, French, Sociology and History there remains potential for recruitment of viable student numbers on modules with at least fifty per cent Canadian content. It is probably within the context of degrees in English that the greatest student numbers are recruited for courses with a Canadian content. There is also potential for Canadian elements within undergraduate modules in other subjects. These might include media and film studies and aspects of social psychology that cover themes of identity in multi-ethnic contexts.

There has been very substantial expansion in postgraduate education in higher education institutions in recent years. Many graduates have elected to follow taught postgraduate courses, sometimes with an interval between gaining their first degrees and enrolling in a postgraduate course. Sastry summarises the trend as follows:

Postgraduate education is the fastest growing sector in higher education. There has been a 21 percent growth in new entrants over the last seven years. There are now nearly 500,000 postgraduate students in UK universities, nearly a fifth of all students.<sup>2</sup>

Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency on postgraduate enrolment trends between 1995–96 and 2002–03 (as presented by Sastry (2004)) reveal a small decline in numbers registered for masters by research (-7 per cent) and doctorate by research (-3 per cent). In the same period there was a substantial increase in numbers enrolling on taught masters courses (+42 per cent).

Data on full-time postgraduate student numbers in 2003–04 reveal the following about recruitment in areas which might contain Canadian themes:

**Table 3:** Full-time postgraduate student numbers 2003–04 by subject

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Full-time postgraduate students</i>
Politics	5820
Sociology	2190
Human and Social Geography	1065
Business studies	15270
Management studies	7190

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## INTRODUCTION

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Media studies	1705
English studies	3265
History by period	2045
History by area	490
French studies	220

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Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Postgraduate taught courses (MA or MSc) are normally specialist and masters by research and doctorates specifically so. Some have a literary, linguistic or cultural focus but many are professional orientation with central themes that provide opportunities for at least some Canadian Studies content. These might include for example, courses with a focus on studies of democracy, human rights, federalism, ethnicity and racism, and managing diversity.

Student numbers at undergraduate and postgraduate level are probably the most significant factor in the survival and development of Canadian Studies in higher education. Undergraduate students remain the greatest potential public for Canadian Studies in education, while postgraduate students provide a potential public that has been expanding in number.

Other aspects of higher education that have had indirect influences upon Canadian Studies have included the various regimes of teaching quality assessment and the research assessment exercise. Involvement in preparation for teaching quality assessment is demanding of time and energy and tends to contribute to a diminution of research time. The effects of the Research Assessment exercise have been complex, with different outcomes for different subject areas. Canadian Studies may be included within area studies as a unit of analysis, although Canadianists may also submit their work in specialist fields such as film studies or literature (anglophone or francophone). Perhaps the greatest impact of the RAE might be through the way in which it has affected needs for research funding and publications. Following the introduction of the RAE, research in some subjects with a Canadian Studies component, such as business and management studies, has been driven by the need to generate considerable amounts of research revenue as well as by topic or research themes. Gaining large research grants for UK-based academics is easier within a UK and European context than through Canadian sources of funding and colleagues have reported that energies that might have been used on projects with a Canadian base have been diverted. Following the formation of research groupings in some institutions in order to promote a research culture that would be viewed favourably by RAE assessment panels, some colleagues with Canadianist interests have been required to omit their publications for the purposes of the RAE in order to preserve the appearance of unity and consistency of departmental research policy. At the same time, the pressure to publish for RAE enumeration has contributed to the impetus for publication of conference proceedings within at least one BACS specialist group.

Academic staff with interests in Canadian Studies, or who are specialists in work on Canada, can be found in almost all higher education institutions, even those relatively small institutions at the margins of higher education. Canadian Studies content in the higher education curriculum can be found in a wide range of subjects, including geography, history, politics, English, French, sociology, social policy, business studies, criminology and law. Canadian Studies nevertheless remains invisible in the data gathered by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Canadian Studies also gains no mention in a recent review of 'strategically important and vulnerable subjects' by HEFCE (2005). The report of this review notes that some subjects provide 'vital research and graduates with specialist knowledge, skills and competencies to the economy or society . . . Others are important for reasons of diplomacy, international relations or on cultural grounds' (p. 3). The report includes reference to area studies although this is linked primarily with minority language provision. It includes reference to recent EU accession countries, especially those in Eastern Europe and the Baltic. The report notes the decline in single honours student numbers in French, Spanish and German modern languages (without disaggregating the data) between 1998–99 and 2003–04, and the low level of postgraduate research students in these subjects. Arguably, Canadian Studies course content can be viewed in ways that are deemed important by this HEFCE review in that Canadian Studies provides skills and competencies to the economy and society and is important on international relations and cultural grounds. The activities of some of the BACS specialist groups are also

relevant to this discussion through the ways that they provide potential links with EU accession countries.

Policy issues considered by HEFCE for strategically important and vulnerable subjects might also be worth considering in relation to Canadian Studies in order to defend its position and to enhance the work of Canadianists in the UK. We could ask whether and how action might be taken to:

1. support the work of Canadian Studies staff (for example in situations where Canadian Studies courses might be affected by re-structuring);
2. inform or influence student demand;
3. support teaching;
4. support research; and
5. promote new collaborative initiatives in Canadian Studies.

Given the economies of scale that are practised in higher education it is unlikely that there will be large groupings of Canadianists in any one institution. Perhaps there are opportunities, given the continued expansion of student numbers, including at postgraduate level, for new Canadian Studies initiatives within subjects which have not traditionally included significant Canadian elements. Perhaps there are opportunities for Canadianists in different institutions to work collectively on producing a postgraduate degree programme in Canadian Studies with a distance-learning methodology on the internet.

### **The study of BACS by period**

The argument of this Sustained Studies report is that the history of the British Association for Canadian Studies may be divided into three phases, each very approximately a decade in length. Historical 'phases' usually include transitional zones of time, and where the postulated phases are so short, the grey areas are proportionately larger. For convenience, the dividing dates might well be taken as:

1. the creation of BACS in 1975 to 1985, when the first administrative co-ordinator was appointed on a part-time basis;
2. from 1985 to 1993, when (after some vicissitudes) a full-scale national office was established based at the Centre of Canadian Studies at the University of Edinburgh, a phase characterised by expansion and maturation;
3. the third 'long decade' follows from 1993 to the present day, a period of consolidation and re-grouping.

However, it should at once be pointed out that even the active core of BACS members would probably barely have noticed these landmarks, at least initially, whereas changes in the nature of the Association's annual conference or the format of its publications would have been more memorable.

### **Assessing the Canadian Studies and BACS experience**

The overall analysis has focused on the following four questions:

1. *How far has Canadian Studies in the UK reflected the multicultural nature of Canada?* The question has a specific focus, but could be inverted to probe a potentially deeper issue: to what extent has 'British' Canadian Studies represented a projection of agendas and concerns from the United Kingdom upon a distant but apparently kindred canvas?
2. *What have been the relations between Canadian Studies in the UK and Canadian government agencies?* It is a basic fact both in the history of BACS and of Canadian Studies programmes around the UK that activities have been dependent upon the funding of the Government of Canada, coupled with its organisational goodwill and the additional support, at various times, of several of the provinces. The integrity of these

relationships constitutes a highly unusual element in the history of any academic endeavour, and may be without parallel in British higher education.

3. *The Canadian Studies Network*. What sort of people have been drawn to involvement in Canadian Studies? How effectively in both personal and professional terms have they worked together? How far has BACS provided a functioning 'network'? To what extent has BACS retained and recruited people? What has been the nature of relationships with 'Canadianists' within Canada itself? What have been the relationships with Canadianists in other countries?
4. *Value added?* This fourth question to some extent subsumes the other three. To what extent has BACS, in the various phases of its existence, supported the interests of its members and advanced understanding of Canada?

It will be apparent that these questions intersect and no doubt also overlap. They also elide in point of time.

Historians usually write with an affected combination of detachment and omniscience. Obviously, such a pose would be inappropriate in this instance. At least two of the principal authors attended – quite independently – their first BACS conference in 1982, and have been actively involved in BACS ever since. It is argued that BACS has developed within the context of the fluid environment of British higher education, its various phases reflecting the changing extent to which academics have been capable of contributing to an area studies association, and have needed and benefited from its support.

#### ***Note and disclaimer: the role of individuals***

There is a sense in which it is misleading to refer to any academic body as an 'organisation' or 'structure'. They are all collections of people, and their histories are in large measure accounts of the activities and inter-relationships of those people. Emphatically, it may be stated that BACS is no exception. In this evaluation, individuals are mentioned primarily to illustrate that particular developments would probably not have taken place without their talents and involvement. Specific acknowledgement of the valuable contributions of named personalities is in no way intended to imply any criticism of, or reservation towards, the contributions of the many active members who are not mentioned in the main text. It is hoped that as many as possible of the members who have held offices or organised events will be included in the supporting Boxes and Appendices. It is also important to stress that attribution of dissenting opinions to named members is also made in full recognition of their good faith in seeking to steer BACS forward towards new challenges. Throughout the first thirty years of formal teaching and research of Canadian Studies in the UK, it has been noticeable that the most active and visionary Directors of Centres and Programmes of Canadian Studies have also been among the office-bearers and most active Council members of BACS.

Examination of Canadian Centre archives and the personal papers of early BACS officers reveal that BACS and local office files are inextricably linked; indeed, to attempt the removal of either aspect risks emasculating the archive as a whole. For the leaders of Canadian Studies, active participation in BACS has enhanced the achievements of the formal HE in Canadian Studies, with BACS providing the opportunities and channels for networking, cross-fertilisation, and the exchange of ideas, and especially in facilitating networking among Canadian Studies students, the academics of tomorrow, which was simply not possible by other means until the development and introduction of the Internet and electronic mail at their present sophisticated levels. At various stages during its formative years, BACS either organised or participated in 'Consultations', which brought people together to share ideas and outline plans. These gatherings, which more recent human resource management would perhaps term 'bonding sessions', were generally good-humoured and optimistic, as would be expected from a format that tended to attract the sociable and the 'doers'. As a result, the BACS record is short on the introspective, and the authors of this study have gratefully quoted from such material as survives. It may also be appropriate here to underline the point, made subsequently in the text, that personal relationships within BACS have been predominantly positive and friendly, a quality that is by no means universal within the academic world.

**The following abbreviations are used in this report:**

ACSI	Association for Canadian Studies of Ireland
AHRB	Arts and Humanities Research Board [since 2005 Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)]
ARO	Academic Relations Officer
BACS	British Association for Canadian Studies
BJCS	<i>British Journal of Canadian Studies</i>
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
ENCS	European Network for Canadian Studies
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
ICCS	International Council for Canadian Studies
ISA	Institute for the Study of the Americas
ICS	Institute of Commonwealth Studies
LCCS	London Conference for Canadian Studies
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SERC	Science and Engineering Research Council
UKCASA	UK Council for Area Studies Associations

‘High Commission’ refers to the Canadian High Commission in London and ‘Foundation’ to the Foundation for Canadian Studies in the UK.

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**Notes**

1. Peter Lyon, ed. *Britain and Canada: Survey of a Changing Relationship* (London: Frank Cass, 1976)
2. Tom Sastry, *Postgraduate Education in the United Kingdom* (London: Higher Education Policy Institute, 2004), p.