

Complete Policy Title:
Undergraduate Award Policy

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Approved by:
Senate

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Undergraduate and Graduate Awards Policy

Responsible Executive:
**Director, Student Financial Aid and
Scholarships**

Enquiries:
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I SCOPE

The University Senate bestows academic awards to encourage and recognize high levels of scholarship. This policy governs undergraduate academic awards, academic grants and bursaries. Specific terms and conditions in addition to these guidelines are noted in the awards' section of the Undergraduate Calendar at <http://registrar.mcmaster.ca/registered/publications.html> and may change from time to time. Terms and conditions related to scholarships and bursaries in the Faculty of Health Sciences can be found at <http://undergrad.medportal.ca/travelawards.aspx>

Only those awards approved by Senate will be recognized at Convocation and included in the Undergraduate Calendar.

II PURPOSE OF AWARDS

Academic awards have been established to encourage and recognize high levels of scholarship, and are provided exclusively for students entering, registered in, or graduating from baccalaureate degree programs at McMaster University. Academic grants recognize a combination of high academic achievement and financial need, Community Contribution Awards recognize non-academic achievements, and bursaries assist those who demonstrate financial need.

III TYPES OF AWARD

a. Scholarships

Scholarships are monetary awards based on academic excellence and, in some cases, other forms of earned merit. Scholarships have a specified value in terms of monetary benefit to the recipient. Scholarship categories, which are defined in the Undergraduate Calendar, include entrance, in-course, part-time, specific achievement (open to all students, usually for achievement in a single course), graduand, travel, and second-degree awards.

b. Prizes

Prizes are monetary awards and/or awards of monetary worth (e.g. book, medal) normally granted for academic excellence in a particular academic area and, in some cases, other forms of earned merit. Prizes may have a specified value in terms of monetary benefit to the recipient.

c. Academic Grants

Academic grants are monetary awards based on a combination of merit and financial need. In-course academic grants are given to students who attain a high sessional average who also demonstrate financial need. Academic grants for entering students are

given to students who attain a high admission average who also demonstrate financial need. A student may receive an academic grant in addition to any other scholarships, prizes, or bursaries for which s/he is eligible.

d. Bursaries

Bursaries are monetary awards based on financial need as determined by the University, and may also include a minimum expectation of academic achievement or other miscellaneous criteria.

e. Community Contribution Awards

Community Contribution Awards are non-monetary, non-academic awards based on one of the following criteria: demonstrated qualities of leadership or innovative skills, or service to the University or community at large, or outstanding athletic or artistic participation. Students receive a certificate and a transcript notation.

Note: An exchange grant is awarded to any student who participates in a formally-recognized University exchange program. The grant is not adjudicated on the basis of academic or need-based criteria and, therefore, is not subject to the terms and conditions in this policy.

IV BASIS OF AWARDS

Awards may be granted on the basis of one or more of the following:

- a. Overall academic performance using high school, sessional, cumulative, or graduation average.
- b. Academic performance in a particular program, course, project or thesis using cumulative or sessional average or course grade.
- c. Achievement in a skill related to the student's academic area in addition to attaining minimum academic requirements.
- d. Non-academic achievements or the display of other qualities deemed worthy of consideration by the University or a Faculty or department of the University.
- e. Demonstrated financial need (only in the case of bursaries and academic grants.)

V GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

General Terms and Conditions

- a. Terms and conditions should ensure equity in competition and distribution.
- b. Terms of award should be free of criteria based on personal characteristics as noted in Section 2 of the Policy on Scholarships and Awards in the Ontario Human Rights Code <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/Policies/PolicyScholarshp/pdf>

Granting of Awards

- a. The Undergraduate Council, on behalf of the Senate, is the awarding body which shall approve the granting of awards as recommended by relevant officials through the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships for University awards.
- b. Selection committees for all awards will be comprised of at least one Faculty member plus appropriate staff consultants.
- c. While a donor may, with the approval of the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, participate in the selection process, the final choice of recipients shall rest in the hands of a selection committee on behalf of the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Undergraduate Council.

Establishing an Award

- a. Terms of award must benefit students and must be written with a minimum of limiting criteria so that, in the opinion of the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships, the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, and Undergraduate Council, eligible students can be effectively identified.
- b. Awards may be mathematical in nature (for example, to be given to the student with the highest mark in a particular program) or judgmental (where other criteria are included such as participation or demonstrated interest and achievement in a subject as deemed by an academic award selection committee.) Academic grants require a combination of academic achievement and financial need; bursaries require that only financial need be demonstrated.
- c. Terms of any undergraduate award must be submitted by the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee to Undergraduate Council for approval. Only approved awards will be listed in the Undergraduate Calendar. Academic awards will also be noted on University transcripts and recognized at Convocation.
- d. Undergraduate Council reserves the right to determine, from time to time, the general requirements to be met by all recipients of undergraduate awards; for example, the attainment of some overall level of scholarship, independent of the terms of an individual award. See [Senate By-Laws \(Article XI, 170. \(vi\).\)](#)
- e. The University, upon the establishment of a trust fund by action of the Board of Governors to support an award, undertakes to abide by the terms attached to funds received through bequests and gifts, provided that such terms are consistent with a-d, above. (see also the Operational Guidelines for Trust Fund Management at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/bms/policy/trust/opguide.pdf>)
- f. The minimum value of a new endowed award is \$800 (which requires a commitment of \$20,000 at the current expenditure policy rate of 4%.) The minimum value of a new annual award is \$1,000 which requires a commitment of that amount for five years.
- g. To establish a new award that requires an academic selection committee to review student applications, the donor must endow sufficient funds to support a minimum annual award of \$2,500 (at the current expenditure policy rate of 4%, the requirement is \$62,500) or provide sufficient funds to support a minimum annual award of \$2,500 for at least five years.

- h. The minimum value of new awards will be reviewed from time to time by the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and adjusted as appropriate.

Amendment of Established Awards

The terms and conditions of established awards represent a formal agreement between the donor and McMaster University. Once approved, terms of award may not be changed at the request of the donor. Amendments may, however, become necessary due to changes or cancellations of particular courses or programs which have been named in the terms, or when there are no longer eligible students, for example. Where the terms of such award become impossible to fulfill through obsolescence, then the University may amend the terms of same to carry out the nearest possible original intent of the donor while still ensuring that the benefit of such award continues.

The approval process for amendments shall be the same as if a new award were being established.

Award Regulations

- a. Student Eligibility

To be eligible for scholarships, prizes and academic grants, a student must have demonstrated an acceptable level of academic achievement. To be eligible for an academic grant, a student must also demonstrate financial need. Only financial need must be demonstrated for bursary eligibility.

As of 2005-06, minimum levels of academic achievement are:

- i. for entrance awards, 80% on the prerequisites for program of study plus the next best Grade 12 U or M courses to a total of six final grades.
- ii. for full-time in-course and retained awards, and academic grants, a 9.5 sessional average and no "F" grades in the session.
- iii. for specific achievement, part-time, graduand and other awards, an 8.0 cumulative average and no "F" grades in the session.

Financial need is determined by the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships and, generally, is based on a student being in receipt of OSAP. Other financial information may be considered in certain circumstances.

Continuing and post-degree students are normally not eligible for awards, grants, or bursaries. Students registered in the McMaster Medical program are not eligible for awards or grants although they may be eligible for some bursaries. Second baccalaureate degree students are not eligible for academic awards unless specified in the terms of a particular award, and are not eligible for graduand awards which they have already received at a previous graduation.

b. Student Information

Applications for awards, supporting documentation such as transcripts and letters of reference, and responses to applications shall be held by the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

That Act and McMaster University's "Statement on the Collection of Personal Information and Protection of Privacy" (http://www.mcmaster.ca/univsec/fippa/FIPPA_Statement.pdf) shall govern the information provided to donors and others concerning award recipients, including publications such as Convocation and award programs.

c. Award Distribution

The University wishes to ensure a fair and wide distribution of the limited number of awards and imposes restrictions on what a student may receive. An eligible student may be granted:

- a travel scholarship and any number of non-monetary awards such as books and medals; and
- an award granted on the basis of an application; and
- awards continued from a previous year (including entrance scholarships), except as provided by the particular terms of an award; and
- either one (major) scholarship of value greater than or equal to a Senate Scholarship (\$800 in 2005-06) and one (minor) award of value less than a Senate Scholarship, or two awards of value less than a Senate Scholarship;
- an academic grant; and
- any award that falls outside the jurisdiction of the Undergraduate Council.

To receive the monetary value of any in-course award, including retained awards, a student must be registered in an undergraduate program at the University during Term 1 of the fall/winter session that follows the review period on which the award is based. An exception is made to the foregoing for students who transfer to graduate: these students may receive the monetary value and transcript notation for any donor-funded award.

With the express permission of the University, an award may be deferred up to one year unless otherwise specified in the terms of a particular award.

A student who withdraws, reduces his/her course load or otherwise alters his/her program of study may be required to forfeit all or part of the award. The decision to rescind an award will be made by the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships, in consultation with Financial Services, and will be based on the terms of the award, the circumstances leading to the student's decision, and the educational costs already incurred.

The University reserves the right not to grant an award in the absence of a suitable candidate, or to limit the number of awards where too few suitable candidates exist. The University also reserves the right to withdraw, or amend the terms of, any award, or to suspend granting of an award or to adjust the stated value of an award in years in which insufficient investment income is available due to fluctuations in investment markets.

Further regulations regarding the distribution of awards that are not inconsistent with this policy may be made, from time to time, by the Director of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships.

Appeals

To submit an appeal on the basis of exceptional circumstances, a student must provide a covering letter and relevant documentation, which might include a letter of support from the Associate Dean/Director of Program and medical documentation, if appropriate. The appeal must be submitted to the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee through the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships.

Some exceptions to the foregoing Guidelines may exist in the terms of a small number of awards established prior to 2006.

APPENDIX 1: WORDING OF UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS

Wording of Awards

Ideally, terms of University awards should include three components:

- a. the award name
- b. two descriptive sentences
- c. award value or range (except in the case of bursaries, the value of which will be determined annually in accordance with the bursary program)

The first sentence should identify the year in which the award was established and the reason for its establishment. The second sentence should identify the specific criteria (academic and/or other forms of merit) that must be met by the student(s) whom the award is designed to recognize. The inclusion in the terms of a program description rather than a specific program name or course number is strongly encouraged to avoid a future problem if a course is discontinued.

Commonly Used Phrases

- a. "A student who has completed Level I" refers to a student who has completed his/her first year.
- b. "A student who has completed Level I and an additional 29-40 units" refers to a student who has completed units equivalent to his/her second year.
- c. "A student who has completed Level I and an additional 58-81 units" refers to a student who has completed units equivalent to his/her third year and is not graduating.
- d. "A student who has completed Level I and an additional 77-122 units" refers to a student who has completed units equivalent to his/her fourth year and is not graduating (applies to five-year programs only.)

Phrases "b" to "d" are not used for awards where the level is not a factor.

- e. "A graduating student" refers to a student who is in his/her graduating year.
- f. The student with "the highest sessional average of an Honours program in" means the highest overall standing in a single Honours program or any combined Honours program.
- g. The student with "the highest sessional average in Level ...of the Honours program in ..." means the highest overall standing in the specific Honours program, not including combined Honours programs.
- h. "Attains the highest standing in English IB03" means the highest standing in that particular course.
- i. "Most notable" or "high standing" or "excellence in" or "outstanding academic achievement" or "on the basis of scholarship" does not mean "highest standing" and must be used in conjunction with "in the judgment of ...".
- j. "High sessional average" in the case of academic grants may not mean the highest sessional average and must be used in conjunction with demonstrated financial need.
- k. "In the judgment of ..." means that a specified group will select a student who has fulfilled minimum academic requirements and other forms of earned merit as noted in the terms of award.

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- l. "Preference will be given to ..." means that attempts will be made to identify a student meeting the specified condition after all other conditions have been met. Usually, such awards would be judgmental in nature.
 - m. "Part-time student" refers to a student who has taken at least 50% of the units he or she has attempted at McMaster on a part-time basis (i.e. less than 24 units per session.)