

Complete Policy Title:  
**University Aid and Awards Policy**

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Approved by:  
**Senate**

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Responsible Executive:  
**Senior Associate Registrar, Student  
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## SECTION I: PREAMBLE

McMaster University (the University) seeks to maximize aid and award opportunities for students while ensuring equity in competition and consistency in administration. In doing so, the University operates within the *University Aid and Awards Policy* to ensure its responsibilities to students and donors are met.

## SECTION II: SCOPE

The *University Aid and Awards Policy* provides the framework through which all University-established aid and award programs must be approved and administered. Established aid and award programs include academic awards, community contribution awards, academic grants, bursaries and work programs.

This Policy does not cover aid and awards established outside the University including, but not limited to, those offered by federal and provincial governments, the Tri-Council Agencies and private organizations. This Policy does not cover departmental financial awards. For further information about the administration of awards outside this policy, please contact the external organization or the administering department.

This Policy is reviewed every three years by the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council, and Graduate Council.

## SECTION III: GLOSSARY

For the purposes of this Policy:

<b>Aid Program</b>	Funding allocated to students on the basis of demonstrated financial need.
<b>Academic Award</b>	An award program that recognizes a student for academic excellence and, in some cases, other forms of earned merit. Academic awards are assigned to categories such as Entrance, In-Course, Graduand, Travel and Exchange.
<b>Academic Grants</b>	<p>A hybrid aid and award program for students that recognizes academic excellence and, in some cases, other forms of earned merit, and demonstrated financial need.</p> <p>In-course academic grants are awarded based on academic achievement in degree work completed at the University.</p> <p>Entrance academic grants are awarded to students entering Level 1, based on the academic achievement in the studies which qualified them for admission to their program.</p>
<b>Award Program</b>	Funding allocated to students on the basis of academic excellence or earned merit.
<b>Bursary</b>	An aid program providing funding to students in the form of a non-repayable grant. A bursary may include a minimum expectation of academic achievement or other miscellaneous criteria.

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<b>Community Contribution Awards</b>	Community contribution awards are non-monetary, non-academic awards, allocated on the basis of demonstrated qualities of leadership or innovative skills, service to the University or community at large, or outstanding athletic or artistic participation. Recipients of community contribution awards receive letters of recognition.
<b>Departmental Financial Awards</b>	Departmental financial awards support students in a manner consistent with the goals of the University, but do not meet all of the approved regulations through which University-established aid and award programs are administered (e.g. assessment of financial need or merit). Departmental financial awards are administered by designated representatives at the University (e.g. Athletics and Recreation) that have established their own processes for identifying recipients. Financial awards do not have "University" or "McMaster University" in the name of the award and contain words such as "Faculty of xxx Financial Award" or "Department of xxx Financial Award" or "Athletic Financial Award". Departmental financial awards are not Senate-approved awards and thus are not included on University transcripts, in University Calendars or recognized at University Convocations.
<b>Funds</b>	The financial resources supporting aid and award programs. Funds may be directed from operating, research and/or donor gifts (trust funds) for awards, academic grants, bursaries and work programs.
<b>Fund Terms</b>	The criteria, typically specified by a donor, that a student must meet in order to receive the proceeds of a fund.
<b>Level</b>	Level is used to describe a student's progression through a program.
<b>Prizes</b>	Academic awards, with a monetary value of \$100 or less, and those with no disbursed monetary value (e.g. books, medals, letters of recognition, etc.).
<b>Registrar</b>	The Office of the Registrar, Student Financial Aid & Scholarships in reference to the Undergraduate Aid and Award Programs, and the School of Graduate Studies in reference to Graduate Aid and Award Programs.
<b>Student</b>	An individual enrolled in a course or program of study approved by the Senate.
<b>University Calendars</b>	The current versions of the <i>Undergraduate Calendar</i> and <i>Graduate Calendar</i> . See <a href="http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca">http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca</a> .
<b>Work Programs</b>	An aid program providing on-campus employment opportunities for students. Part-time opportunities are available during the fall and winter terms, while both part-time and full-time opportunities are available during the summer term. Students earn at least minimum wage. Work programs provide partial reimbursement of an approved student's salary to employers who hired students into approved work program positions.

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## SECTION IV: PURPOSE

This Policy provides guidance and consistency for members of the University community in the provision of aid and award programs including:

- (a) principles that govern aid and award programs,
- (b) establishing minimum eligibility requirements, and
- (c) establishing and amending fund terms.

## SECTION V: PRINCIPLES

The University offers aid programs to assist students who demonstrate the greatest financial need. Need-based aid may be delivered in the form of bursaries and/or work programs.

The University offers award programs to encourage and recognize the achievement of entering, enrolled, and graduating students. University award programs include:

- (a) Academic awards which recognize high levels of scholarship, and in some cases other forms of earned merit, in the form of awards and prizes;
- (b) Academic grants which recognize high academic achievement and demonstrated financial need; and
- (c) Community contribution awards, which recognize non-academic achievement, such as service to the University or community at large.

The University administers aid and award programs according to Canadian law, trust law and the [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on Scholarships and Awards](#).

Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council, on behalf of the Senate, approve the granting of aid and awards, as recommended by the Registrar, and, in the case of School of Medicine administered aid and awards, the Program Manager of the Undergraduate Medical Program.

To ensure a fair and wide allocation of aid and awards, the Registrar:

- (a) Maintains, through an annual review process, the current University Calendars as the primary source of aid and award program information.
- (b) Updates the General Regulations of aid and award programs in the University Calendars to confirm the availability of aid and award programs, to define all aid and award program eligibility criteria, and to identify any restrictions on the number and value of awards that a student may receive.
- (c) Restricts the allocation of aid and awards, to remain compliant with external regulating bodies (e.g. Tri-Council Agencies).
- (d) Restricts second baccalaureate Undergraduate degree students from receiving any academic award or academic grant, unless the terms of a particular donor award specify eligibility and the student has not received the award previously.
- (e) Restricts the allocation of aid and awards according to the fund terms imposed by a donor (e.g. higher academic average requirement).

- (f) May choose not to grant aid or awards in the absence of a suitable candidate; may choose to limit the number of recipients selected where funding is limited; may choose to limit the number of recipients selected where too few suitable candidates exist; and/or may choose to generate applicant pools for awards by application, where complete applications have not been received.
- (g) May revise the terms and stated value and/or suspend the granting of aid and award funds (e.g., donor funds).
- (h) Will make aid and award program information widely available to students through the University Calendars, websites and other means, as appropriate.
- (i) Will not violate other University approved by-laws and policies (e.g., [Senate By-Laws](#); [Operational Policy and Procedures for Trust and Endowed Fund Management](#); [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#); [Field Trips, Student Placements and Research Activity Planning and Approval Program](#), etc.).

## SECTION VI: ELIGIBILITY FOR AID AND AWARD PROGRAMS

This Policy identifies the minimum eligibility requirements for student aid and award programs:

- (a) To receive the monetary value of aid and awards, students must be enrolled at the University.
- (b) Upon request of the student, and with the express permission of the Registrar, aid and awards may be deferred up to one academic year, unless otherwise specified in the General Regulations for aid and award programs or in the specific fund terms in the University Calendars.
- (c) A student who withdraws, is on approved leave, changes academic load from full to part-time, reduces course load or units, has approved to graduate status or otherwise alters their program of study may be required to forfeit all or part of their funding, per the General Regulations of the aid and award programs in the University Calendars. The decision to rescind or reduce funding will be made by the Registrar and will consider the General Regulations of the aid and award programs, the specific terms of the aid/award funding, the circumstances leading to the student's decision (e.g. compassionate grounds), the educational costs already incurred and other relevant information.
- (d) If the University concludes, based on reasonable grounds, that an aid or award applicant or recipient has falsified or withheld information as part of an application or misrepresented oneself or achieved academic results through dishonest means (see the [Academic Integrity Policy](#)), the student may have their application removed from consideration and/or be required to forfeit all or part of their funding and/or be restricted from receiving further funding by the Registrar.
- (e) Where selection of an aid or award recipient requires judgment, faculty representatives, and/or department representatives, a Faculty Selection Committee and/or a University-wide Selection Committee may be asked to rank and/or recommend eligible students. The Registrar and, in the case of School of Medicine administered funds, the Program Manager of the Undergraduate Medical Program, will review the returned rankings/recommendations and make the final funding decision.
- (f) Allocation of aid is completed according to the General Regulations of the aid program in the University Calendars and is dependent on demonstrated financial need.
- (g) Financial need must be determined on the basis of one or more of the following:
  - Canadian federal and/or provincial government student aid applications (e.g. OSAP),
  - completion of a standard University Need Profile,

- student discussions with designated staff on campus (e.g. Student Loans Officer, Indigenous Student Counsellor, etc.) who confirm the need for emergency or special consideration funding.
- (h) In determining need, and the allocation of University administered funds, the Registrar must also comply with the policies, procedures and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD). This includes, but is not limited to, the Ministry's Student Access Guarantee, which mandates the institutional aid obligation (payment amount and deadline date) for a student.
- (i) Allocation of awards is completed according to the General Regulations of the award program in the University Calendars.
- (j) All awards must be granted on the basis of one or more of the following:
- Overall academic performance;
  - Academic performance in a particular program, course, project or thesis using one or more of the following criteria including, but not limited to, work completed (e.g. essay, project, thesis, placement, research, research potential, etc.), grades, averages or standing;
  - Achievement in a skill related to academic studies;
  - Non-academic achievement(s) and/or the display of qualities deemed worthy of consideration;
  - Demonstrated financial need in the case of academic grants (see g above).
- (k) All awards have a minimum academic requirement. The minimums are defined in the General Regulations of the award program in the University Calendars. Donor funds may have additional academic requirements noted in the University Calendars and/or fund documentation.

## SECTION VII: APPEAL PROCEDURES

The University has a responsibility to provide fair and equitable procedures for student appeals relating to aid and award programs. These appeal procedures are outlined in the General Regulations in the University Calendars.

## SECTION VIII: PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

Applications for aid and awards, supporting documentation (e.g. transcripts, letters of reference, income tax notices of assessment, student loan entitlements, etc.) and responses to applications shall be held by the Registrar and, in the case of School of Medicine administered aid and awards, the Program Manager of the Undergraduate Medical Program in accordance with the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#).

That Act and McMaster University's [Notice of Collection](#) statement shall govern the information provided to donors and others concerning award recipients, including publications such as convocation programs and award booklets.

## SECTION IX: REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory annual reporting to the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council, include identification of award recipients, aid and award performance summaries and identification of participating committee members.

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## SECTION X: ESTABLISHING FUNDS TO SUPPORT AID AND AWARD PROGRAMS

When establishing funds, to support aid and award programs, the Registrar:

- (a) Ensures that the fund terms benefit students and are written with a minimum of limiting criteria.
- (b) Seeks approval of the fund terms through the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Undergraduate Council, or the Graduate Council.
- (c) Ensures all necessary approvals are in place prior to publicizing the fund terms, making application forms available, receiving applications, selecting recipients and/or disbursing funds.
- (d) Determines the manner in which recipients will be selected, for example, mathematically on the basis of calculated need or average, or judgmentally, on the basis of an application or nomination.
- (e) Determines whether an application is needed to support the evaluation of non-academic criteria, such as community involvement.
- (f) Where an application is required, determines the content, deadlines, and supporting documentation requirements to support the evaluation and selection process (e.g. reference letters, curriculum vitae, University transcript, statement of interest, essay, etc.).
- (g) Establishes University-wide Selection Committees to rank and/or recommend students for funding where use of judgment is required. Additionally, the Registrar will provide a list of University-wide Selection Committees and participating members to the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Undergraduate Council on an annual basis.
- (h) Oversees the University-wide Selection Committees ensuring a minimum of three members, including at least one faculty member, are involved in the funding recommendations. If the funding is open to students from more than one career (i.e. students enrolled in Graduate, Medicine, Undergraduate degrees), the Registrar ensures that the committee has representation from each area (i.e. Graduate, Medicine and Undergraduate).
- (i) Establishes faculty and department contacts where faculty- or department-specific award adjudication is required.
- (j) Protects the University's academic integrity and autonomy as it relates to funding decisions. In no case shall a donor and/or their representatives select, vote or have a veto over the recipients of funding. The final choice of recipients rests solely in hands of McMaster University.
- (k) Requires a minimum donor contribution to support aid and awards. Currently:
  - The minimum value to establish an endowed fund that supports University aid and awards is \$20,000. This commitment, at the current expenditure policy rate of 4%, generates \$800 annually.
  - The minimum value to establish a fund that is not endowed that will support University aid and awards is \$3000 (a minimum commitment of \$1000 per year for three years).
  - The minimum value to establish a fund that is not endowed that will support University aid and awards by application is \$7500 (a minimum commitment of \$2500 per year for three years). The minimum value to establish an endowed fund that will support university aid and awards by application is \$62,500. This commitment, at the current expenditure rate of 4%, generates \$2500 annually.



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*\*These minimums will be reviewed from time to time by the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council and adjusted appropriately.*

- (l) Undertakes to abide by the terms attached to trust funds received through bequests and gifts, provided that such terms are consistent with this Policy. See also the [Operational Policy and Procedures for Trust and Endowed Fund Management](#).
- (m) Includes only Senate approved awards (i.e. approved through the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Undergraduate Council and/or Graduate Council) on University transcripts.
- (n) Includes only Senate approved awards in the University Calendars.
- (o) Includes only Senate approved graduand awards in University Convocation publications, and of these, recognizes only the top University and Faculty awards, at University Convocations.
- (p) Considers the potential for emerging gift types that do not meet current University-established aid and award program policy. University Advancement may also recommend to the Registrar, the Undergraduate Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council that new aid and award programs and/or policies, be established to meet the requirements of emerging gift types.

## SECTION XI: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING FUND TERMS

When writing fund terms to support new aid and awards, the following guidelines apply (see Appendix A for further information):

### Name

The name could be representative of the donor and the aid or award program (e.g. The McMaster Alumni Association Bursary).

### Descriptive Sentence 1

The first sentence typically identifies the year in which the award was established, the donor name(s), degree awarded, class year (e.g. Class of '50 (for 1950) and Class of 2020), or anonymous request, and the reason for its establishment.

### Descriptive Sentence 2

The second sentence identifies the specific criteria (need-based, academic and/or other form of earned merit) that must be met by the student for whom the funding is intended. Note: the fund terms should be as broad as possible to ensure administrative sustainability and disbursement of funding as intended.

### Preference Statement

The third sentence may confirm a donor's preference (if applicable). "Preference will be given to ..." confirms that attempts will be made to identify a student meeting the donor preference after all conditions specified in the descriptive sentences have been met. For award purposes, this usually means that the award is judgmental in nature. For aid purposes, it may mean that a student must self-identify (e.g. "I am a sole support parent"), to be allocated particular funding. Preference statements are treated as self-declarations and are not necessarily verified by the Registrar. In the case of bursaries, preference statements typically affect the source of a student's bursary funding, not the amount.

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Note: the preference statement should be as broad as possible to ensure administrative sustainability and disbursement of funding as intended.

### **Award Value**

An initial award value is typically specified for awards and academic grants. The value may be specified as total dollars and duration. Award values may also be non-monetary, as is the case for prizes (e.g. books, medals, etc.) or community contribution awards (e.g. letters of recognition).

### **Number of Recipients**

It is preferable that the number of intended recipients not be specified, to allow the Registrar to set the number based on available funding.

It is also preferable that bursary values not be specified, to allow the Registrar to set bursary values annually, in accordance with the General Regulations of the bursary program.

## **SECTION XII: AMENDING TERMS OF ESTABLISHED FUNDS**

The terms of established funds, supporting aid and awards, represent a formal agreement, whether funded through an operating or research account or donor trust fund. When a donor establishes aid or award funding it takes the form of a trust fund administered by McMaster as trustee. Trust funds hold gifts (donations and bequests) that have been *designated* according to terms and conditions agreed upon by a donor and the University. Trust funds may only be altered in accordance with their original purpose, and generally may only be altered if the original purpose is impossible or impracticable to administer. Superficial changes (such as changes to a name or value of an award) are allowed.

Amendment to terms may, however, become necessary due to changes such as cancellations of courses or programs which have been named in the terms, or when there are no longer eligible students. The University may propose to amend the terms to carry out the nearest possible original intent of the donor.

When aid and awards are no longer available (e.g. operating or research funding no longer exists or a trust fund has been closed) they need to be discontinued and removed from publications such as the University Calendars.

Changes to aid and award fund names and terms, as well as discontinuation of aid and awards funding must be approved through the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council.

Changes to aid and award values are managed by the Registrar based on available funding and the [Operational Policy and Procedures for Trust and Endowed Fund Management](#) and do not require Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council approval. Changes to aid and award values are reported to the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council for information.

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### SECTION XIII: POLICY AMENDMENTS AND EXCEPTIONS

The *University Aid and Awards Policy* is reviewed every three years by the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee and Graduate Council. Recommended amendments must be approved by the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, and Senate prior to implementation.

The University may amend, from time to time, the general requirements to be met by all recipients of University aid and award programs. This may include, but is not limited to, the attainment of some overall level of scholarships, independent of the terms of an individual award. See [Senate By-Laws](#) (Article XI, 164, (f) and (g)).

The University may amend this Policy, as recommended, from time to time, by the Registrar to the Undergraduate Council Awards Committee, Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, and Senate.

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## APPENDIX A: COMMONLY USED PHRASES IN FUND TERMS

- i. **“A student who has completed Level x”** Example: “A student who has completed Level 1” refers to a student who is enrolled above Level 1, while “A student who has completed Level 2” refers to a student who is enrolled above Level 2. Note: This phrase should not be used where level is not a factor in determining the aid or award recipient.
- ii. **“A graduating student” or “student graduating”** refers to a student who is in their graduating year and will be assessed for an award at the completion of their graduating term. Example - “... to be awarded to a student graduating from an Engineering and Management program.”
- iii. **“A student in a Sociology program...”** allows students in all B.A., Honours and Combined Honours Sociology programs to be considered. This open language is preferred.
- iv. **“A student currently enrolled in a graduate program in Chemistry...”** allows graduate students enrolled in programs offered by the Department of Chemistry to be considered. This includes both Master’s and Ph.D. students.
- v. **“A student in an Honours program in Sociology...”** allows students in both a single Honours program and Combined Honours programs in Sociology to be considered.
- vi. **“A student in Level 3 of the Honours Sociology program...”** allows a student in Level 3 of the specified Honours program and will not include Combined Honours programs. This is typically as narrow as terms should be written. Note: 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 problems where programs and/or courses are no longer offered.
- vii. **“A student registered in the English Ph.D. program...”** allows only students enrolled in the specified Ph.D. program to be considered.
- viii. **“To be awarded to a graduate student in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Preference to be given to a graduate student pursuing research in preventative medicine...”** allows Master’s and Ph.D. students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, who are pursuing research in preventative medicine, to be considered for the award. If the administrator is unable to first identify an eligible student pursuing research in preventative medicine, the award may then be granted to eligible graduate students enrolled in Master’s or Ph.D. programs in the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- ix. **“Most notable” or “high standing” or “excellence in” or “outstanding academic achievement” or “on the basis of scholarship”** does not mean “highest mathematical standing” and must be used in conjunction with **“in the judgment of ...”**.
- x. **“In the judgment of ...”** means that judgment will be used to select a student who has fulfilled the minimum aid or award program requirements and other criteria as noted in the fund terms. Selection by committee may be required.
- xi. **“Penultimate”** means the second to last level of a program. Example: “To be awarded to the student who has completed the penultimate year at the most recent spring review, and who ranks highest in scholarship, leadership and influence.”