

Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program

Student Assistance Policy

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Student Assistance Policy

Table of Contents

1. BACKGROUND 3

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE POST SECONDARY PROGRAM 4

3. INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT ASSISTANCE POLICY 4

4. DEFINITIONS..... 5

5. ELIGIBILITY..... 8

6. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE: FULL TIME STUDENTS 9

7. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE: PART TIME STUDENTS 12

8. LIMITS OF ASSISTANCE 12

9. PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE 13

10. APPEAL PROCESS 14

11. STUDENT REGISTRY 14

12. STUDENTS NOT IN GOOD STANDING 14

13. STUDENT REVIEWS..... 15

14. ANNUAL POLICY REVIEW 16

15. BOARD OF DIRECTORS RIGHT TO REVIEW 16

16. INFORMATION AND APPLICATIONS 16

Student Assistance Policy

1. BACKGROUND

The Southern First Nations Secretariat is a Tribal Council with seven participating First Nations. The First Nations are;

- Aamjiwnaang First Nation,
- Caldwell First Nation,
- Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation,
- Chippewas of the Thames First Nation,
- Delaware Nation,
- Munsee-Delaware Nation.
- Oneida Nation of the Thames,

The Southern First Nations Secretariat has a mandate to provide a broad range of advisory and information services, technical and administrative support, and coordination of regional initiatives for First Nation peoples in Southwestern Ontario.

Southern First Nations Secretariat is governed by a seven member Board of Directors appointed by the participating member Nations. As it relates to Post-Secondary Education Program, the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Directors are:

- To provide direction to the Executive Director and/or Coordinator of the Post Secondary Education Program of the Southern First Nations Secretariat concerning the overall management of the Program,
- To review annually the student assistance policy,
- To provide guidance to program staff in the review, evaluation, and/or development of recommended revisions to First Nation specific programs provided by the local colleges and universities,
- To review quarterly reports provided by the Post Secondary Program Coordinator and staff of the Post Secondary Education Program,
- To review and approve the three yearly intake submissions (October 1, March 1, and May 15) presented by the Executive Director and the Post Secondary Program Coordinator. There may be three intakes for review of student applications based on available funds.
- To establish an appeal's committee to review appeals granted to students.

Student Assistance Policy

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE POST SECONDARY PROGRAM

The goal of the Southern First Nations Secretariat Post Secondary Program is to assist registered member students of the Caldwell First Nation, Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Delaware Nation, and Munsee-Delaware Nation to access post secondary education in order to graduate with the qualifications and skills needed to pursue individual careers.

The Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program objectives are:

1. To improve employability of First Nation students and increase post secondary enrolment and graduation rates.
2. To the limit of funds available in the budget, the Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program will provide financial assistance to eligible students in the pursuit of their post secondary education.
3. To provide for student counselling as an important part of the Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program.
4. To provide financial assistance for tuition fees, books and supplies and a monthly living allowance for full time eligible students.
5. The Post Secondary Program is an assistance program and not designed to meet every need a student may have.
6. Funding is limited and not all students may be funded or partial funding may be provided.

3. INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT ASSISTANCE POLICY

This document outlines the Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program Student Assistance Policy.

The Objectives of the Post Secondary Program Student Assistance Policy are to:

1. Establish the criteria to be met by students in order to qualify for, and maintain eligibility for financial assistance;
2. Outline the types and maximum levels of allowances that may be available; and
3. Provide for the maximum duration of assistance that may be provided with respect to various levels of post secondary education through the Post Secondary Program.
4. While receiving financial assistance students are obligated to make their education studies a top priority and to ensure they are achieving an acceptable Grade Point Average (GPA) requirement for their program of studies. (See extenuating circumstances page 7)

Student Assistance Policy

4. DEFINITIONS

In this document

- A. “Southern First Nations Secretariat” and the “Secretariat” for the purposes of this Post Secondary Program Student Assistance Policy have the same meaning, and includes only those First Nations identified specifically in section (2) as may be amended from time to time.
- B. “Registered member” means a person whose name has been entered on the First Nation membership roll and in the Indian Register Maintained by the Department as defined by the *Indian Act*.
- C. “AANDC” is an abbreviation of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.
- D. “First Nation” shall have the same meaning as “Band” defined in the *Indian Act*.
- E. “Post secondary education” means a program of studies, offered by a post secondary institution, for which completion of secondary school studies or equivalent is prerequisite.
- F. “Academic year” is as defined by the post secondary institution, but will not be less than eight months duration.
- G. “Board of Directors” are the Board of Directors of the Southern First Nations Secretariat, as appointed by the participating First Nations.
- H. “Canadian public institution” is a post secondary institution which receives the majority of its funding from federal and provincial governments.
- I. “CEGEP” is an abbreviation of College d’enseignement general et professionnel. CEGEPs operate in Quebec.
- J. “Course months” are defined as the number of months required to complete a program or course of study.
- K. “Deferred student” is a student who was eligible in the past but not funded due to limited funds/lack of funds.
- L. “Extenuating circumstances” are unplanned events of a significant nature and may include medically diagnosed condition or illness, death in the family or accidental injury. Extenuating circumstances does not include ceremonies or religious practices.

Student Assistance Policy

- M. “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” – Federal student aid comes from the federal government – specifically the U.S. Department of Education. It is money that helps a student pay for higher education expenses (i.e. college, career school or graduate school expenses). Federal student aid covers such expenses as tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies and transportation. Aid also can help pay for a computer and for dependent care. There are three main categories of federal student aid; grants, work-study and loans. Check with your school to find out which programs your school participates in. Website information www.fafsa.gov.
- N. “Family” – is defined as a student’s spouse, child(ren), siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and their spouses child(ren), siblings, parents and grandchildren.
- O. “Foreign Institution” is any post-secondary institution located outside of the geographic boundaries of Canada.
- P. “Full time students” are defined as students who are registered in a recognized post secondary institution and attend classes a minimum of 15 credit hours per week during any school term, semester or school year.
- Q. “Part time students” are defined by the post secondary institution. Part time students may receive assistance for tuition and compulsory fees and the actual cost of books and supplies, but are not eligible for a living allowance.
- R. “Grade point average” is the grade assigned to the student by the post secondary institution of registry for the average graded achievement of all courses undertaken in an academic year. Where a grade point average is assigned by the institution, they will do the equivalency conversion to A, B, etc.

A+	90 – 100 %	Grade A	Grade Point 4	Description – Excellent
A	80 – 89 %	Grade A	Grade Point 4	Excellent
B	70 – 79 %	Grade B	Grade Point 3	Good or Above Average
C	60 – 69 %	Grade C	Grade Point 2	Satisfactory or Average
D	50 – 59 %	Grade D	Grade Point 1	Below Average or Poor
F	Less than 50%	Grade F	Grade Point 0	Unsatisfactory or Failure

- R. “Board of Directors” are the Board of Directors of the Southern First Nations Secretariat, as appointed by the participating First Nations.

Student Assistance Policy

- S. “Mature Student” is defined as a person over the age of 21 and who has been out of school for at least two years and meets all other eligibility criteria in this policy.
- T. “Post Secondary Counseling Unit” are the staff employed by the Southern First Nations Secretariat for the delivery of this program, and includes the Coordinator, Counsellors, Executive Assistant and Administrative Office Clerk.
- U. “Post Secondary Institutions” are degree, diploma, and certificate granting institutions which are recognized by the province of Ontario, and include education institutions affiliated with, or delivering accredited post secondary programs by arrangement with a post secondary institution.
- V. “Private post secondary institution” is a post secondary institution which receives the majority of its funding from the student fees, and from sources other than governments.
- W. “Program of Studies” includes all post secondary programs leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree. For the purposes of this policy, the program of study is divided into the following categories:
- Level I:** UCEP, Community College and CEGEP diploma or certificate programs.
 - Level II:** Undergraduate Programs.
 - Level III:** Advanced or professional degree programs e.g. MD., Masters or Doctoral Programs.
- X. “Semester” refers to a part of the academic year, as defined by the post secondary institution. Semesters usually cover the periods from September to December, January to April, and May to August.
- Y. “Student” is defined as a full or part time post secondary student sponsored by the Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program.
- Z. “Textbooks and supplies” are defined as: textbooks identified by the school/course list as necessary for the course. Supplies will include items such as: pens, pencils, paper, binders, notebooks and etc. Supplies do not include laptops, computers or computer programs.
- Z1. “Ticket” is defined as the number of times a student is eligible for sponsorship by the Post Secondary Program, in a certificate, diploma, or degree in a post secondary program.
- Z2. “First Ticket” is defined as the successful completion of a program of studies and receiving of a certificate, diploma, or degree.
- Z3. “Second Ticket” is defined as studies in another program field, pursuing graduate studies, or a change in a career focus that can be unrelated to the first ticket program of studies.

Student Assistance Policy

5. ELIGIBILITY

- 5.1. To be eligible to apply for assistance under the Southern First Nations Secretariat Post Secondary Student Assistance Policy applicants:
- i. must provide proof of being registered members of the Caldwell First Nation, Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, or Munsee-Delaware Nation. Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and Delaware Nation members must apply to their First Nation Education Office.
 - ii. must have been resident in Canada for 12 consecutive months prior to the date of application for funding. This clause will not apply to non-resident students that are currently being funded (prior to May 14, 2015).
 - iii. must possess a grade 12 secondary school graduation diploma or its equivalent and have met university or college requirements. As well, students who have previously received certification from a government recognized educational institution such as CEGEP or an ACE program are eligible. (Effective May 15, 2003 for the September 2003 intake).
 - iv. must satisfy the Southern First Nations Post Secondary Program that they will be attending the closest Canadian post secondary institution to their permanent residence, to which they have met entrance requirements and which offers their program of chosen studies.
- 5.2 Within the limits of funding received by the Secretariat, through contributions from AANDC, the Post-Secondary Program may provide financial assistance through the following priority allocation system:

Priority Designation	Definition of Designation
1	Students continuing post secondary studies, in good standing within this policy and funded by SFNS the previous semester. Applicants enrolling in Aboriginal teacher language programs. Students who have ceased to attend school for extenuating circumstances which can be documented.
2	Deferred students/applicants from the previous year who were a first time applicant and denied due to lack of funding
3	Students newly graduated or within a 24 month period from secondary school and moving into post secondary studies within this policy.
4	Adult/mature students who are first time applicants. Age 21 and over, GED, ACE graduates.

Student Assistance Policy

5	Adult/mature students returning after a break (for 2 or more consecutive semesters) in post secondary studies, and in good standing within this policy and meeting all other eligibility criteria. (e.g. SSW to BSW to MSW)
6	Students who have previously dropped out or discontinued their program and out of school for two or more consecutive academic semesters.
7	Students not in good standing from the previous semester. May be eligible for the costs of tuition and books only as per available funds.

- 5.3. The Post Secondary Program does not apply restrictions for eligibility based on age, terminal illness, or learning disabilities.
- 5.4. Students who are self-funding their post secondary studies and applying to the program, the priority system will apply at the time of application.

6. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE: FULL TIME STUDENTS

- 6.1. Tuition Assistance includes student’s fees for registration, tuition, and the cost of books and supplies which are listed as required by the program of study in the post secondary institution.
- 6.2. Tuition assistance may be provided:
 - i. for students attending Canadian public institutions, at the normal rate in Canadian dollars charged by the institution for a Canadian student.
 - ii. for students attending Canadian private post secondary institutions where a comparable program is offered by a Canadian public post secondary institution, at the normal rate in Canadian dollars as charged by the Canadian public institution nearest to the student’s place of residence at the time of application.
 - iii. for students attending Canadian private post secondary institutions where no comparable program is offered by a Canadian public post secondary institution, at the rate in Canadian dollars as charged by the Canadian private institution.
 - iv. High Cost Tuition Fees: students are encouraged to seek out less costly but similar programs, all tuition fees exceeding \$10,000.00 Canadian funds per annum will be subject to the Board of Directors approval.
 - v. For students attending a foreign public post secondary institution, where no comparable program is available in Canadian public post secondary institution, at actual rates in the appropriate currency.

Student Assistance Policy

- vi. For students attending a foreign private institution, where no comparable program is available in Canadian public/private post secondary institution, tuition will be paid at actual rates in the appropriate currency. Approval from the regional AANDC office must be acquired prior to funding students in such a situation.
 - vii. For students attending foreign public and/or private post secondary institutions where a comparable program is offered by a Canadian public post secondary institution, at the normal rate in Canadian dollars as charged to a Canadian student by the Canadian public institution nearest to the student's place of residence at the time for application.
 - viii. In the case of a First Nation Post Secondary Institution, the tuition fees will be those normally charged to students attending a comparable program at a nearby provincial institution.
 - viii. Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR) will be deemed an eligible expense.
- 6.3. Travel Assistance:
- i. All travel costs are at the expense of the student including relocation expenses.
 - ii. Conference Funding: Students may be eligible for funding that includes registration fees and travel expenses to attend conferences and school trips that are mandatory and directly related to their program of studies by being a part of the regular curriculum which must be supported with a letter of recommendation from their instructor. All mandatory conferences must be known at the start of the program and communicated to their counsellor. Students must provide their counsellor with a written report and expense receipts upon return.
- 6.4. Assistance for Living Expenses: Training allowances to help cover students living expenses may be provided at a rate not to exceed that established by the Secretariat in consultation with the Committee from time to time. The current rates, with last change date, are attached as Annex I. Training allowances are in Canadian funds. Part months will be pro-rated for the first two weeks, and full month assistance for three weeks or greater.
- 6.5. Exceptional Assistance: Exceptional assistance for legally or institutionally required activities for final professional certification or licensing may be provided as well as special testing fees as determined by the circumstances of each student
- 6.6. Distance Education Programs: Students that are employed and receiving wages will be eligible to receive financial assistance with the payment of tuition fees, text books and supplies, and a pro-rated living allowance.
- 6.7. Ineligible Assistance: Correspondence programs and Internet programs offered by private institutions will not be funded.
- 6.8. College and University application fees will not be paid or reimbursed by the SFNS post

Student Assistance Policy

- secondary program. Application fees include OCAS, OUAC applications for Master, PhD's and etc.
- 6.9. All online studies are eligible for tuition fees and books only. Extension fees for online course work will not be covered.
- 6.10. High cost Equipment Purchases: High cost equipment purchases such as computers, cameras, musical instruments, culinary supplies and etc., requires documentation from the college or university that the purchases are a necessary part of the program. Students will be asked to cost-share 25% of high cost equipment. If a student fails to complete their program of studies, all high cost equipment purchases become property of Southern First Nations Secretariat and must be returned immediately. Failure to return equipment to the post secondary program will affect future assistance eligibility.
- 6.11. Special Needs Purchases: Special Needs Equipment purchases such as computers, readers, scanners and etc. The student must provide a copy of their IEP documentation that identifies their learning disability. If a student fails to complete their program of studies all special needs equipment becomes the property of Southern First Nations Secretariat and must be returned immediately.
- 6.12. Books and Supplies Assistance: Support for books and supplies will normally cover textbooks and supplies including special equipment, officially listed as required by the university or college for a student's program of studies. An amount in excess of \$800.00, but not over \$2000.00 per school year may be approved if a student demonstrates need by submitting copies of the course outlines and the prices charged by the institution's bookstore or suppliers.
- 6.13. For a student enrolled in community college or CEGEP diploma or certificate program, or an undergraduate university program, the maximum amount payable per full-time student under the post secondary program cannot exceed \$35,000.00 per year. On an extraordinary and justified basis, the maximum amount payable per year for a student in an advanced or professional degree program (e.g. dentistry, medicine) or a Masters or Doctoral program may exceed \$35,000.00 up to a maximum of \$50,000.00. Such awards may be granted by special request on a case-by-case basis only and considered when a graduate student has extraordinary circumstances that warrant the setting aside of the standard policy on maximum amounts payable. Funding for an individual graduate student above \$35,000 must be reviewed by the SFNS Board before approval is granted. This is a maximum allowable payment per student. No student is entitled to this amount. The maximum amount was established to ensure that the most extreme circumstances could be funded as necessary. The actual amount of funding available to a student will depend on the overall amount of funding available in the program and for each recipient.
- 6.14. Health and dental fees will not be paid or reimbursed by the SFNS Post Secondary Program. First Nation citizens have health, dental and prescription drug coverage through the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (Health Canada).

Student Assistance Policy

7. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE: PART TIME STUDENTS

Part time students may receive assistance for tuition and the cost of books and supplies as detailed in 6.1 which are listed as required by the post secondary institution.

8. LIMITS OF ASSISTANCE

8.1. Assistance may be provided for one time sponsorship (called tickets) in each level as per the following:

Level I: University/college preparatory programs:

1 year General Arts and Science/ CEGEP OR
1 year college pre-technology, pre-health sciences, pre-business OR
Human Services Foundation programs.

Level II: Community college diploma or certificate programs (2-3 years or 16 to 24 course months) OR
2 year General Arts and Science Program for individuals entering university studies only.

Level III: Undergraduate programs (3-4 years or 24 to 32 course months).
An additional 8 course months may be granted for the honours program.

Level IV: Advanced or professional degree programs e.g., MD., Master programs (1 to 2 years or 12 to 24 months).
Doctoral programs (2 to 4 years or 24 to 48 course months).

8.2. Tuition assistance as outlined in 6.1 may be provided to students enrolled in all four levels.

8.3. Assistance for living expenses as outlined in 6.4 may be provided to students to complete one program at each level.

8.4. Level III will include assistance for an additional student year at the bachelor level to acquire an honours undergraduate degree.

8.5. The duration of assistance will be in accordance with the official length of the program as defined by the post secondary institution in which the student is enrolled.

8.6. Students enrolled in Level II and III may be assisted for up to one additional academic year per level if such an extension is approved in writing by the institution's dean or the head of department.

8.7. Students enrolled in Level IV may be assisted for up to one additional academic year for medical or personal reasons.

8.8. Students may be assisted in Level I studies after dropping out of Level II studies. If a student resumes Level II studies, the previous time spent at Level II will be counted for

Student Assistance Policy

assistance purposes. Students who have completed Level II studies, with or without assistance from this program are ineligible for level I assistance with the exception of post-diploma programs that specify BA requirements for admission.

- 8.9. Students who have completed a Level III program, with or without assistance from this program, are ineligible for Level I or Level II program assistance.
- 8.10. Students who have completed a Level IV program, with or without assistance from this program, are ineligible for Level I, Level II or Level III program assistance.
- 8.11. Where students change programs within one of the levels, the academic years used for each program within this level will be counted for assistance purposes.
- 8.12. Students who become eligible for assistance and who have previously completed a portion of post secondary studies without assistance from this program may receive assistance for the balance of their program of studies in accordance with 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4.
- 8.13. Teacher Additional Qualifications – Assistance may be provided for a maximum of six AQ's, up to and including two specialist qualifications.
- 8.14. Intersession/summer term will be funded only when it is a regular scheduled semester for continuing students; in addition to Native specific programs which are only offered during the summer, i.e. Native Teacher Training, Native Language, Native Classroom Assistant.
- 8.15. Retirees and persons age 65 and older in receipt of pension benefits will receive assistance for the costs of tuition fees and books only.
- 8.16. In the situation where a student attends a foreign/international post-secondary institution and qualifies to receive federal/state financial aid in the form of Pell grants, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), bursaries or sport scholarships, the federal/state aid will take precedence over the SFNS tuition sponsorship, with the exception of work study programs and loans.
- 8.17. Students receiving funding from the post secondary program must declare support received from this program as a source of income when applying for social assistance.

9. PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE

There may be three intakes for review of student applications. For the purpose of clarity, applications may be confirmed as having been received for review if they have arrived by fax, been postmarked as mailed, or delivered in person for:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| ➤ September enrolment, by | May 15 |
| ➤ January enrolment, by | October 1 |
| ➤ Intersession/summer school, by | March 1 |

Student Assistance Policy

Applications for assistance will be reviewed and decisions communicated to the last known address provided by the students within 30 days of the deadline established for each session. Applications received after the deadline date may be eligible for tuition and books only, on an available funding basis.

10. APPEAL PROCESS

To ensure fairness and equitable treatment, any student may appeal any decisions made under this policy following the outlined procedure:

- a) All Post Secondary appeals must be made in writing within (10) working days of receipt of notification.
- b) All appeals must be forwarded to the Executive Director of the Southern First Nations Secretariat.

The Appeal Board shall be comprised of three Directors, but not the Director representing the First Nation from which the appealing student is a member.

- c) All inquiries related to any appeal must be directed to the Executive Director of the Southern First Nations Secretariat.
- d) All information to be used in the appeal must be provided in writing to the Executive Director of the Southern First Nations Secretariat
- e) All decisions made by the Appeal Board must be finalized in writing within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal.
- f) All decisions of the Appeal Board are final. A student may not appeal to AANDC the administrative decisions and appeal rulings made by the SFNS Appeal Board.
- g) There is no appeal against refusal of assistance because funds are not available.

11. STUDENT REGISTRY

The Secretariat may maintain a student registry. At a minimum, it would include the student's name, the institution attended, the program of study, the support provided, the results obtained, and any additional information which may be required from time to time. This information will be used for statistical purposes only and will remain confidential. The Secretariat may report this information, in confidence, annually to the Department.

12. STUDENTS NOT IN GOOD STANDING

- 12.1 Any expenditure made to or on behalf of a student for which that student is ineligible,

Student Assistance Policy

places that student in a “Not In Good Standing” status within the meaning of this policy. Examples of situations are as follows:

- a) Allowing tuition payments under Section 6(2) to be made on their behalf where a stop payment opportunity existed and was missed.
- b) Producing an unsatisfactory academic progress report.
- c) Incarceration
- d) Giving false/invalid information at the time of application.
- e) Participating in inappropriate use of funds.
- f) Any other reason approved by the Board of Directors.

12.2 The Post Secondary Counselling Unit may set terms and conditions to allow students to regain their “Good Standing” status by:

- a) Allowing the student to repay any funds paid out during the period of ineligibility.
- b) Allowing the student to use their own financial resources to attend and successfully complete one full term or semester before being considered for sponsorship.

13. STUDENT REVIEWS

13.1 Upon the completion of each 4 month term or semester, all sponsored students will undergo an academic review to determine continued full-time financial assistance. The post-secondary team/counselor will determine student success by the following guidelines:

- a) 75% successful completion of the students full time course load
- b) A GPA of 2.0 (60%) or higher or the standard set by the students program of studies will be the determining guideline for a student to be deemed in good standing.

13.2 Students deemed not in good standing and achieving below the standards mentioned in 13.1 above will become ineligible for further financial assistance. The priority designation will apply.

14. ANNUAL POLICY REVIEW

The Board of Directors will meet in November of each year with the Post-Secondary Counseling Unit Staff to conduct a review of this policy. Any changes to the policy resulting from the review will, if at all possible, be made effective for the September intake following the meeting. In a timely fashion, changes will be communicated to First Nations, students, and appropriate post secondary institution support personnel.

Student Assistance Policy

15. BOARD OF DIRECTORS RIGHT TO REVIEW DECISIONS

The Board of Directors reserves the right to review and rescind any decision made under this policy as may be justified by new and relevant information.

16. Information and Applications

For further general information or information on process and deadlines for applications for assistance, call 1-800-668-2609 or 1-519-692-5868 or write to:

Southern First Nations Secretariat,
22361 Austin Line,
Bothwell, Ontario.
N0P 1C0

Attention: Post Secondary Program Coordinator

Fax: (519) 692-3062

Southern First Nations Secretariat
Post Secondary Program
Monthly Allowance Rate Schedule

Fulltime student monthly allowance rate: \$1000.00 Canadian, US students will be paid in Canadian Funds

Effective September 2014