



Gitksan Government Commission

**Post-Secondary
Education Assistance Program
Policy**

For Member Bands and Education Societies:

Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Sik-e-dakh

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I. BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The Gitksan Government Commission (GGC) is responsible for the development of operating policies and guidelines to guide the administration of the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEPP) for the member bands of Gitanmaax, Gitanyow, Sik-e-dakh. This policy guides the First Nation Education Departments in assessing the eligibility of students to receive financial assistance to attend accredited post-secondary institutions in an eligible program of study.

1. VISION STATEMENT

The Gitksan Government Commission (GGC) and its member Bands/Education Societies seek to financially support qualifying Band members who wish to attend recognized and accredited post-secondary institutions. The GGC and its Member Bands believe in helping their Band members to improve their status academically, socially, and economically. Upon completion and/or graduation of their program, the GGC and its Member Bands/ Education Societies hope that students will contribute to their respective families and community.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the GGC Member Bands/Education Societies Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program Policy statement is explicit. This policy is designed to assist the Education Coordinator or Program Administrator and prospective students.

3. GITKSAN VALUES, CUSTOMS AND LAWS

Education is a lifelong journey of learning. In the Gitksan culture, education is holistic; spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects are just as important as academics.

The Gitksan maternal (pdeek/wilna'taahl) and paternal (wil'si'wiitxw/wil'sa'laax) families, typically guide and supports the children's education, both informally and formally.

The Gitksan are matrilineal, meaning children receive their experiential learning from their mother's side. The primary obligations of maternal aunts and uncles are to nurture, protect, defend, groom, guide, advise, and instruct. In addition, the father's side also carries obligations. The strength and well-being of the extended family ensured through maternal and paternal obligations.

Because of the Gitksan interface with mainstream Canada, Gitksan families have another pathway, or option for their formal education, which includes: the provincial curriculum, from kindergarten to grade 12, as well as "higher learning" or post-secondary education.

Formal education is not intended to replace traditional learning. It is a tool to be used to strengthen the members of the Gitksan Nation.

4. STUDENT'S ROLE

Deciding to further your education is one of the most important choices that you will make in your lifetime and it should not be taken lightly. The decision to pursue your education, and more importantly to succeed in post-secondary, requires careful planning by you and your support network.

a) Working with the Band Education Coordinator: Potential students **MUST** meet with the Band Education Coordinator as early as possible to ensure their pending transition to post-secondary is as seamless as possible. Although Academic Advisors and Education Coordinators cannot predict all of the issues that may arise during a student's post-secondary career, they do possess a wealth of information including but not limited to the following:

- 1) Identifying academic prerequisites required for entrance to the student's chosen post-secondary program and identifying the transferability of courses between post-secondary institutions;
- 2) How to complete Post-Secondary Admission Forms;
- 3) How to register for courses;
- 4) How to apply for post-secondary funding, scholarships, and bursaries;
- 5) How to budget and allocate funds responsibly;
- 6) How to adjust to life as a first-year student;
- 7) What it takes to be a successful post-secondary student;
- 8) Testimonials and helpful hints from post-secondary graduates.

The Band Education Coordinator/Administrator supports students to realize their full potential and reach their academic goals. It is never an inconvenience to hear from a student and continued communication is strongly advised. The Band Education Coordinator/Administrator should be called upon whenever a student is uncertain about how to proceed with matters about their education.

b) Scholarships, Bursaries, and Grants: Prospective students are encouraged to explore alternate sources of funding, such as scholarships, bursaries, and grants. Students who have received partial or full scholarships/bursaries for the duration of their program which covers tuition, books, and supplies will still be eligible to receive a living allowance, high rent, and travel (if applicable). The years that the student receives living allowance and travel will be counted in their overall training years. If a student later wants to take a different program and depending on their success in their first program, the band will consider paying the tuition and books only pending availability of funds. Normally ISC funds are to be used to fund "one" course of study.

c) Applying for Post-Secondary Funding: Each Band member applying for a contribution under the Band Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program must submit a complete application package.

The application package must include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Letter of Intent | 8) Post-Secondary Funding Application Form |
| 2) Most recent transcripts | 9) Post-Secondary Student Contract |
| 3) Acceptance Letter from institution | 10) Living Arrangements Form (if needed) |
| 4) Student Budget | 11) Release Form – For Student |
| 5) Copy of Status Card | 12) Release Form – Post Secondary Institution child(ren) |
| 6) Copy of Birth Certificate for dependent | 13) 7) Program Outline and Costs |
| 7) Direct Deposit Authorization | |

5. BAND OR EDUCATION SOCIETY'S ROLE

The Band or Education Society respects the lead role played by the extended Gitksan family in matters of Education.

However, most families' financial capacity to afford post-secondary education is greatly reduced due to poor economic conditions in the community. The main role of the Band or Education Society is to administer financial support to post-secondary students who are members of the Band, subject to Indigenous Services Canada and GGC policy and funding.

In addition to administering financial aid, the Band's Education Coordinator may offer the following:

- a. Assist current high school students to prepare for a post-secondary institute by ensuring they possess the prerequisites required for entrance into their chosen program;
- b. Assist students with applications for post-secondary funding, scholarships, bursaries, and entrance applications to post-secondary institutions;
- c. Provides academic advising to potential and current students;
- d. Provides moral and emotional support to current students;
- e. Works as a liaison between the student and the post-secondary institution when requested by the student.

It should be noted that Indigenous Services Canada does not recognize the funding of post-secondary education for First Nations as a legal obligation. Rather, the present Federal administration provides funding as a matter of policy, buoyed by the high demand and success rate of the program. This means that there is no legal guarantee that funding will continue at present levels or continue at all.

II. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM POLICY

1. FISCAL TIME FRAME

- a. The Gitksan Government Commission receives transfer payments for post-secondary education funding through a contribution agreement between the Gitksan Government Commission and Indigenous Services Canada. Funds received by the Gitksan Government Commission must be disbursed within the fiscal year within the budget.
- b. Based on May 31st application deadline, the Gitksan Government Commission disburses funds to its member bands.
- c. Applicants, who wish to receive funding for intercession or summer sessions, must receive advanced approval and continue to meet all other requirements. Funds for sessions outside of the normal September to April school year may not be available due to funding constraints.
- d. Applicants, who wish to receive funding for intercession or summer sessions, must receive advanced approval and continue to meet all other requirements. Funds for sessions outside of the normal September to April school year may not be available due to funding constraints.

2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- a. To be considered for the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program:
 - 1) The Applicant must be a registered Band member;
 - 2) The educational institution must be on the Indigenous Services Canada accredited list.
- b. If the applicant is a new Band member who has transferred from another Band;
 - 1) The applicant will not be eligible to apply for post-secondary assistance program funding until the two-year waiting period expires;
 - 2) The two-year waiting period can be waived if the Band, from which the new Band member has transferred, provides a copy of the student's education file;
 - 3) If the applicant previously received funding from his or her original Band, then the applicant will only be eligible for a residual number of years' funding, in compliance with Appendix 1: Funding Period Limitations, and;
 - 4) The applicant has recourse to the appeals process (page 14).

3. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Students must complete and submit the Post-Secondary Application form (section V of the policy), including all required supporting documentation to the Education Coordinator. Students are responsible for ensuring that their application form is complete, signed and received by the deadline. Incomplete applications will cause delays. Any application that misrepresents the student's circumstances (where a student is claiming living allowance in relation to a spouse), will result in denial of funding or cancellation of funding.

Late applications will be placed on a waiting list provided the application is complete. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- a. The **deadline date is May 31st** for submitting the Application Package. This covers funding for September of that year to the end of April of the following year (the “study period”).

4. APPLICATION CRITERIA AND PRIORITY

Applicants to the Band Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program must meet certain criteria in order to be eligible for the program:

- A) The academic standards that the student must meet are as follows:

Continuing post-secondary students must achieve:

- 1) **A minimum of a C+ grade point average**, in the absence of higher standards being required by the post-secondary institutions, or;
- 2) Whatever minimum grade point average the post-secondary institution dictates as the minimum standard, or;
- 3) In the event of a conflict between the institutions policy and the Band’s policy, the higher standard prevails. For example, an institution requires a minimum of a C- grade point average, but the Band requires a C+ grade point average. The Bands average is higher and thus the student is required to maintain a C+ grade point average even though the institution requires less.

- B) The **minimum full-time course-load** that students in the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program must maintain is as follows:

- 4) A minimum of four (4) courses or twelve (12) credit hours or equivalent, per semester. If minimum courses or credit hours are determined by the institute, then the institute requirements will prevail.
- 5) In the event of a conflict between the institutions policy and the Band’s policy, the **institute’s standard prevails**.
 - a) For example, an institution requires a minimum of 3 courses per semester, but the Band requires a minimum of 4 courses per semester, the Institution’s full time course requirement will prevail and thus the student is required to maintain the institution’s required courses.

For students already accepted into the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program:

- a) **Official transcripts** from the post-secondary school must be submitted to the Band as soon as they become available (at the end of each semester) and;
- b) Failure to provide transcripts in a timely manner may result in funds being withdrawn or withheld by the Band until the transcripts are received and the student’s academic standing is verified.
- c) If, for whatever reason the student is unable to provide transcripts in a timely fashion, the student should provide interim/unofficial transcripts by way of written proof or electronic email format from the institution that he/she remains in a good academic standing until the official transcripts are available.
- d) If final transcripts are not submitted to the Band, it will be reported and documented to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) that the student did not successfully complete their semester in good standing in accordance with the Band policies.

4. Students are responsible for **registering of courses** as required by the post secondary institution and provide a copy to the Education Department. Late registration fees are the responsibility of the student.
5. Students must inform the Education Department of any **changes in their enrollment status** from full time to part time.
6. Students who intend to **drop any courses** must notify the Education Department. Course selection is very important for determining funding eligibility and students may be required to reimburse the band for courses dropped without a valid reason.

C) The **priority** for allocation of Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program funds is as follows (highest priority listed first):

1) Continuing / Returning Post-Secondary Students

- a) Continuing students have proven their commitment to their post-secondary education by achieving and maintaining high academic standards during their initial year(s) of post-secondary;
- b) Continuing students have successfully completed part of their post-secondary education and thus, are closer to completing their programs and entering the workforce;
- c) Continuing students who were in good academic standing but withdrew do to unforeseen medical conditions.

2) Current Year Graduating Grade 12 Students

- a) The success rate of first year students is not sufficient enough to consider them above the continuing students who have already completed part of their programs with high academic success;
- b) Grade 12 high school students often do not know if they have successfully completed their high school education until their transcripts are made available mid-July, delaying the process of all other applicants;
- c) University College Entrance Program (UCEP) may be required if the student was unsuccessful in obtaining their Academic Dogwood or if a student requires upgrading in obtaining their program prerequisites.

3) New Applications

- a) New Applications – Mature students who have never applied for or received post-secondary funding assistance;

4) Re-application

- a) Re-application 1 – Students who have been funded in the past and have completed their original degree in good standing and are now in pursuit of further qualifications.
- b) Re-application 2 – Students who have been funded in the past but had their funding cut on account of poor academic standing.

5. NOTIFICATION

a. Successful applicants will be notified in writing by the Band or Education Coordinator:

- 1) If funds are available, the successful applicant will be informed of the schedule for funds disbursement as well as the amounts to be disbursed,

- 2) If funds are not available, the successful applicant will be informed that he or she will be placed on the waiting list, and
 - 3) Students placed on the waiting list are responsible for periodically checking their status on the waiting list.
- b. Successful applicants will be required to sign a **Student Contract** with the Band or Education Society. The Student Contract will outline the terms and conditions of the funding agreement between the two parties (the student and the Band).
 - c. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing by the Band or Education Coordinator. Such notification will outline the reasons why the applicant was not successful.
 - d. Unsuccessful applicants wishing to appeal an unsuccessful application, after having received the reasons in the written notifications, must do so according to the Appeal process (page 14).
 - e. All students will be notified on or before **July 1st** each academic year.

6. ELIGIBLE PROGRAMS

- a. Under the Indigenous Services Canada Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and the University and College Entrance Preparation (UCEP), an eligible program of studies (e.g., trades, sciences, arts) is a program:
 - 1) For which the completion of secondary school studies, or the equivalent as recognized by the post-secondary institution or the provincial/territorial ministry of education, is required; (e.g., trades program requirements often only require Grade 10 completion for entrance into the trade program) and;
 - 2) Delivered at an eligible institution as defined in section 7, Eligible Institutions.
 - 3) UCEP programs must provide the student with the necessary courses to attain the academic level for university or college entrance.
 - 4) Refer to the Ministry of Education in the student's province or territory of residency for information on student admissibility to a program of study (See section 7).
 - 5) Delivery method may be in-classroom, e-learning, distant learning, or virtual learning as long as it meets all eligibility criteria.
- b. The following types of programs will be considered for funding through Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program:
 - 1) **Post-Secondary programs** at an accredited and recognized post-secondary institution including:
 - a) Programs leading to a one-year certificate,
 - b) Programs leading to a two-year diploma for Associates Degree,
 - c) Programs leading to a four (or five) year Bachelor's Degree,
Example: Teachers require a Bachelor of Education that consists of a four-year undergraduate Bachelor's Degree and a two-year post-graduate Bachelor of Education Degree.
 - d) Programs leading to a six-year post-graduate Masters/professional's Bachelor's Degree.
 - e) Programs leading to a post-graduate credential, such as a PhD; length of funding is considered on a case-by-case basis.

2) University College Entrance Program (UCEP)

- a) The maximum time limit for financial support will be two (2) academic years (as defined by the institution offering the program) or in the case of part-time students, the equivalent of two (2) academic years or a maximum of 24 months.
- b) The academic level of the program **MUST** be at the **Grade 11/12** level or first year university and college preparation courses. Fundamental levels, Grade 10 or lower, are not eligible under this program; and
 - i. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they possess the fundamental prerequisites prior to applying for UCEP funding. Students who are unclear about the academic level of their courses should consult their Education Coordinator or the education institute's Academic Advisor to ensure they are meeting all requirements.
 - ii. Adult Basic Education (ABE) **IS** separate from UCEP. Students enrolled in ABE are not eligible for UCEP funding.
 - iii. UCEP students receive a living allowance, while ABE students do not.
 - iv. Short Term Funding - Students wishing to receive funding for short term courses must fill out an application and submit it to the Education Coordinator. (See Section V)
 - v. Short term funding will fund courses that are not covered by post secondary (e.g., First aid, WHMIS, H2S, etc. tickets that lead to employment) and providing funds are available.

7. ELIGIBLE POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Eligible post-secondary institutions are degree, diploma or certificate granting institutions that are:

- a. Recognized by a province or territory (in Canada or abroad); **or**
- b. Educational institutions recognized to deliver post-secondary programs by arrangement with an eligible postsecondary institution.
- c. A [list of eligible Canadian post-secondary institutions](#) is available. This list is effective as of April 1, 2015 for new PSSSP/UCEP students and will be updated and adjusted as necessary on an ongoing basis.
- d. A [list of eligible Foreign post-secondary institutions](#) is available. This list is effective as of April 1, 2015 for new PSSSP/UCEP students and will be updated and adjusted as necessary on an ongoing basis.
- e. If the program of studies is in a foreign institution, the student must provide evidence that it is recognized in Canada as an acceptable post-secondary program of studies.
- f. **ADDITIONS TO APPROVED LISTS OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**
Where the institution selected by the student is not listed on the Annual Register of PSE Students, ISC's regional office in the region where the institution is located, will request documentation from recipients to formulate a recommended action as per section 7, Eligible Institutions of the National Program Guidelines, to the Education Branch Headquarters for discussion.

8. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

a. Tuition:

The rate of **Tuition Support** for post-secondary is as follows (maximum of \$ 4,500.00 per academic semester):

- 1) For a recognized and accredited Canadian public educational institution, the normal rate charged by the institution, and
- 2) For a private or foreign post-secondary institution, the normal rate charged by the nearest public Canadian institution offering a comparable program, or
- 3) For a private or foreign post-secondary institution, the normal rate charged (in Canadian dollars not to exceed set maximum tuition per academic year) by the private or foreign post-secondary institution, when no comparable program is available at a public Canadian institution to be determined by case-by-case basis.

b. Textbooks and Supplies:

1) Post-Secondary Level:

a) \$1500.00 towards textbooks, supplies and toolkits for an academic school year.

- Textbook and supply costs will be invoiced directly to the Band from the institution's bookstore;
- Students who purchase their supplies elsewhere (online or other stores) may submit their receipts to the Band for reimbursement, as long as the costs do not exceed \$1500.00 allocated for the academic school year.
- The Education Coordinator will check receipts for the student's book and supply purchases to ensure the student is using the funds for that which it was intended.

2) University and College Entrance Preparation Program Level:

a) \$500.00 towards textbooks, supplies and toolkits for an academic school year.

- Students who purchase their supplies elsewhere (online or other stores) may submit their receipts to the Band for reimbursement, as long as the costs do not exceed \$500.00 allocated for the academic school year.
- The Education Coordinator will check receipts for the student's book and supply purchases to ensure the student is using the funds for that which it was intended.

3) Living allowances

Full Time students are eligible to receive financial support in the form of living allowance to be used toward living costs such as food, shelter, clothing, daily transportation, utilities, child-care and other personal items. The maximum amount a full-time student is eligible to receive will be determined by the Education Department in accordance with the chart set out in Appendix 3.

- 1) In the event that there is a strike at the post secondary institute a student is attending, the student will still be eligible for living allowance and may chose to transfer to another Institute offering the same program.
- 2) The living allowances will be paid in Canadian dollars regardless of the location of the institution.

- 3) Living allowances are paid for Christmas and study breaks. Additional time may be allowed for students to settle into accommodation at the place of study at the beginning of the academic year and to move out at the end of the academic year.
- 4) Where two students are married to each other, and have no dependents, the living allowance for each will be calculated as a married student with an employed spouse.
- 5) Where two students are married to each other and have dependents, one of them will be designated as a married student with an employed spouse with dependents; the other will be designated as a married student with an employed spouse;
- 6) See Appendix 3 for current rates.

d. Travel Support for Students:

Students are responsible for making travel arrangements well in advance and it is strongly encouraged that students always seek economic means for travel. Students who live in the same location as their institution are not eligible for travel assistance.

- 1) One-way travel will be provided at the beginning of the study period from the student's **usual** place of residence to the educational institution attended,
- 2) Two-way travel may be provided during the usual Christmas break, from the institution to the student's **usual place** of residence, and back again, subject to the availability of funding;
- 3) One-way travel will be provided at the end of the study period from the educational institution to the student's **usual** place of residence,

e. Other Expenses

- 1) Initial professional certification and examination fees;
- 2) Official transcript fees;
- 3) Application fees from the school of choice;
- 4) Students taking classes through distance education or e-learning who are required to travel to another location to complete their required exams may be eligible for travel support. However, requests for accommodations such as taking the exam in the local school under the supervision of a teacher or school principal should be first examined to minimize travel costs;
- 5) Tutorial, guidance and counseling services for students enrolled in the PSSSP or the UCEP.

9. PART-TIME STUDENTS

- a. Part-time students are eligible to receive assistance for tuition, compulsory fees, the actual cost of books and supplies at the full amount.
- b. Part-time students may be eligible for living allowance or travel costs at a pro-rated amount based on funding availability on a case by case basis.

10. SUMMER PROGRAMS

Consideration will be given for summer program funding on a case-by-case basis and providing funding is available.

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11. EXPENSES NOT INCLUDED

PSE funding cannot be provided for the following:

- a. Parking;
- b. deferred exams or rewrites;
- c. clothing;
- d. backpacks;
- e. medical prescriptions, etc.

12. PRACTICUMS

Students who are required to do a practicum as part of their post secondary studies will receive support if they are required to go to a location outside of their community or school location. (e.g., student attends post secondary in Pr. George but is required to take practicum in Kamloops)

13. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The GGC strongly supports students who face challenges associated with a disability. In addition to working with an institution to ensure that institutional supports are accessible, GGC may be able to provide sponsorship accommodations for students with disabilities. Accommodations may include the provision of additional funding and/or adjustments to course loads to help students be successful in their educational pursuits.

How to Qualify for Additional Supports

Students are asked to provide documentation as to the type and degree of disability. This documentation must be **one** of the following:

- a) A provincial exceptionality certificate (i.e. high school assessments, psycho ed assessments etc.);
- b) A physician's letter that includes the impact that the disability may have on the student's ability to complete their studies, the anticipated length of time that any accommodations may be required;
- c) A letter from the institution which confirms there is an accommodation requirement due to a disability.

Accommodations for students with Disabilities

Adjustment of course load requirements: The GGC recognizes that students with disabilities may require program scheduling changes to be successful in the chosen program.

College Preparation: During the first 4 month term, qualifying students may enroll in 2 courses and /or 6 credits each term and still be considered full time and eligible for living allowance.

University Transfer: Following the first term of study, qualifying students may register in 3 courses and/or 9 credits and be considered full time.

Graduate Studies: A graduate student in both a qualifying year and their post-graduate studies will be considered full time if enrolled in a minimum of 3 courses and/or 9 credits.

Additional Funding for Tutoring: Where a student requires more than the maximum amount available for tutor support in order to be successful in their studies, a higher amount may be provided up to \$500 per four-month academic year. The maximum amount of funding for tutoring support for spring and/or summer terms is \$400 per term.

Grade Point Average

Students will be required to maintain the Grade Point Average as listed below:

- a) A minimum of a C+ grade point average, in the absence of higher standards being required by the post-secondary institutions, or;
- b) Whatever minimum grade point average the post-secondary institution dictates as the minimum standard;

14. CHANGING OR PAUSING A PROGRAM OF STUDY

If a student changes programs within one of the levels, the number of academic years or semesters used at that Level is still counted and will be considered when calculating the amount of time that financial assistance is available to the student. Therefore, students must be aware that such changes may affect the overall funding available and their ability to complete their program.

15. LIMITS OF ASSISTANCE

Assistance can be provided at four levels of post-secondary education (See Appendix 1 for further breakdown):

- a. Level 1: Certificate / Diploma;
- b. Level 2: Undergraduate Degree Program;
- c. Level 3: Graduate Degree / Masters or Professional Degree;
- d. Level 4: Doctoral Degrees.

16. ACADEMIC PROBATION

- a. Students who do not uphold the minimum course load, do not maintain the C+ grade point average requirement, withdraw from a course too late to receive a refund, or fail a course will be placed on a semester long academic probation the following semester.
- b. Living allowance will be withheld from the student if they do not communicate or reply to the Education Coordinator's requests for updates on their academic standing and/or transcripts. Living allowance will be reinstated upon the submission of mid-term marks that fulfill the minimum C+ grade point average.
- c. Students who fail to improve their academic performance during the academic probationary period will have their funding terminated.

17. Termination

- a. If the post-secondary institution terminates the student, then the student is immediately and automatically terminated from receiving any further financial assistance under the Band or Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program,
- b. The Education Coordinator may terminate the student for the following reasons:
 - 1) For breach of study contract between the student and the Band and GGC;
 - 2) For not maintaining full time course load;
 - 3) For failing to attend classes full time;
 - 4) For failing to improve academic performance during the academic probationary period;
 - 5) For failing to submit required documentation (transcripts, mid-term updates, etc.);
 - 6) For deliberate misrepresentation of the students financial or academic positions (fraud) and; 7) Student withdraws from post secondary institution without a valid reason.
- c. The terminated student may be required to return to the Band all or parts of the funds that the student received under the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program. If the student is required to return the funds, the amount owed will be based upon the student's attendance and academic record with the institution.
 - 1) Example: A student drops out of school in October but fraudulently collects living allowance and tuition costs until the end of the fall semester, the amount owed by the student is counted from the last time the student attended classes in October.
- d. If the student feels they have fulfilled all the requirements as stated by this policy and does not agree with their termination, the terminated student may start the appeal process.

18. Appeals**a. First Level of Appeal – Education Coordinator, Education Society and/or Band Administration**

- 1) Any student or applicant who has a grievance under the Gitksan Government Commission's Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program must appeal within 10 days of termination.
- 2) The student writes a letter of appeal and provides supporting document / correspondence to the Education Coordinator.
- 3) The Education Coordinator will review the request and make a decision within 5 business days of having received the appeal.
- 4) If the Education Society or Band Administration become involved, or are requested to be involved, the appeal process will take longer than the usual 5 days.

b. Second Level of Appeal – Education Advisor for the Gitksan Government Commission

1. Any student or applicant who has initiated an appeal and has received a written decision from the Band Administration is entitled to have that written decision reviewed by the Education Advisor of the Gitksan Government Commission.
2. The student or applicant will submit to the Education Advisor a written request for review of the appeal decision within two weeks of having received the Band Administration written decision.
3. The Education Advisor will organize at least one communication (phone/email) with the student or applicant to discuss the review of appeal, within two weeks of having received the request for review of the appeal decision.
4. The Education Advisor will give to the student or applicant, a letter outlining the reasons why the request for review of the appeal decision will or will not be considered within two weeks.
5. The decision of the GGC Education Advisor is final.

19. Reinstatement

- a. After termination by the Band/Education Society, the student may be reinstated for a final chance, if the student demonstrates a serious commitment to securing a post-secondary education.
 - 1) By paying education costs out-of-pocket for one semester (Band will NOT reimburse) and;
 - 2) By achieving a C+ average.

- b. The Band/Education Society will not provide funding for students to repeat courses, unless exceptional circumstances warrant such funding. If a student chooses to repeat a course they failed while being funded by the Band, the student must pay for said course out-of-pocket.

20. Fraud

- a. Money received by the student through the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Programs is to be used for the purpose for which it was intended. That is, students are to use the funding for the specific educational purpose for which it was provided. Any student, who uses the money for a purpose other than the one related directly to the student's education, commits fraud. The Band/Education Society will not tolerate fraudulent behavior and such behaviour may be reported to the RCMP for investigation.
- b. Students or applicants are required to honestly report their true financial and academic situation when submitting an application under the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program. Any deliberate attempt by the student or applicant to misrepresent his or her true financial or academic situation on an application or on any interim correspondence will constitute fraud and will be grounds for termination. **For example: alteration of transcripts is considered fraud.**
- c. Students, who quit school but continue to collect funds from the Band, are liable to repay the full amount of funding received. Payment options can be discussed with the Band /Education Society. Any and all additional post-secondary sponsorship will be withheld until the Education Department has received a payment in full. (See section V for repayment form).
- d. Students who prove to be fraudulent will not be eligible to apply for post-secondary funding for a period of no less than four years and will not be eligible to re-apply unless repayment of funds is made in full.

21. Student Loans

Should the student or applicant enter into any student loan agreement with the Province of British Columbia or Indigenous Services Canada, then the student (or applicant) will be solely responsible for any liabilities incurred. The Band/Education Society will not be responsible for the repayment of any student loan signed under the student or applicant's name.

22. Contingency Fund

Within funding constraints, the Band / Education Society wishes to support the student's ability to fulfill his or her tribal obligations under Gitksan Law. The Band or Gitksan Government Commission will make a reasonable attempt to assist students needing financial support in order to attend a funeral (and/or feast) of an immediate family member (children, father, mother, brother, sister, maternal and paternal grandparents only). Any such financial support may count against the student's total allowable travel expenses, subject to funding availability.

Although the Band wishes to support their students in times of bereavement, the contingency fund is not guaranteed and subject to the availability of funding not already spoken for within the Band's Post-Secondary Assistance Program Budget.

23. Confidentiality

- a. All records, documents, information, and data contained in the student files are classified as personal and confidential. Upon consent of the student, records will only be released to:

- 1) Chartered banks or credit unions for the purpose of arranging disbursements to the students,
 - 2) Post-Secondary institutions for the administrative purposes,
 - 3) Social service agencies, as required by the statute or regulation,
 - 4) Native or non-native social housing agencies, as required by and application for subsidized rental housing, and
 - 5) Internal researchers, providing that the student's name does not appear in any research reports or documents, and providing that student's confidentiality is protected at all times.
- b. The applicant, upon acceptance into the Post-Secondary Assistance Program, will be requested to sign a release form (Schedule 5)

24. Amendments to Policy

- a. The Gitksan Government Commission reserves the right to amend the Post-Secondary Assistance Program policy from time to time, as necessary (ex: if there are changes to the National Policies);
- b. All suggested changes will be brought forward to the GGC Board for approval;
- c. Policy changes will only affect new agreements. Existing agreements will be “grandfathered” to the end of the current academic year to ensure that no current student faces unreasonable or unexpected hardship due to a change in policy.

IV. DEFINITIONS

“**Academic Year**” normally means two consecutive semesters of study, the first beginning in September of the calendar year (the fall semester), and the second beginning in January of the following calendar year (the winter semester). See also “Study Period”.

“**Appeals**” refers to the process whereby an applicant who has been refused or a student who has been terminated may seek a review of the decision.

“**Applicant**” refers to a person applying for post-secondary funding through a sponsoring Band / Education Society.

“**Application Package**” refers to the forms the applicant must submit in order to be considered for the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program.

“**Apprenticeship Programs**” refers to certified programs that lead to trades certification. Funding for these programs is usually of short duration, from four to six weeks.

“**Band**” is an administrative unit that has the same meaning as defined in the Indian Act. In this document it refers to a sponsoring Indian Band in the Gitksan Nation. In some instances, the term may be replaced with the “Village Government”.

“**Band Member**” refers to a person registered with an Indian Band and who appears on the Band list. The person may normally reside in his or her home reserve (the village where Band affairs are administered), in another First Nations reserve, or off-reserve.

“**Bursaries**” are financial awards available to students based primarily on financial need. Some bursaries are only available to certain defined groups (such as women or Aboriginals). Sources include government, educational institutions, and private foundations or individuals.

“**Certificate**” is the credential granted for one or two semester programs.

“**Child Care Costs**” means the costs paid to a caregiver to care for the student’s children ages 11 years and under, in order for the student, spouse, or common-law partner to attend classes or work during the pre-study or study period.

“**Child Care Subsidy**” means the amount of money given to the student and/or student’s spouse by the BC Ministry of Human Resources to help pay for child care.

“**College Preparation**” (college prep) refers to programs that prepare students for enrollment in the post-secondary program. Funding for college prep is limited to ten months, maximum.

“**Common-Law**” means a relationship according to the following conditions:

- 1) Two people living together in a marriage-like relationship, and;
- 2) The two people have been living together for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the start of classes.

“**Continuing Student**” – means an applicant who is applying for funding to continue their studies after having already been funded through the First Nations Post-Secondary Assistance Program.

“**Course Load**” refers to the number of courses or credit hours a student is enrolled in per semester. Based on the standard 3 credit hour courses, the minimum course load required in the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program is 4 courses (12 credit hours per semester)

“Declaration of Residency” is proof of Canadian Citizenship. This form will demonstrate that the applicant has resided in Canada for a minimum of twelve (12) months prior to their application for post-Secondary funding from their Band.

“Degree” is the credential granted for Associate (2 years), Bachelor (4 or 5 years), Masters (1 to 3 years), or Doctoral programs (1 to 3 years).

“Dependant” means a person who is financially dependent upon the student. To be eligible, a dependant must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) The student’s and/or spouse’s minor children less than 18 years of age as of the start of classes, for whom the student and/or spouse have custody or provides care for at least two days per week; or
- 2) The student’s and/or spouse’s permanently disabled children age 19 or over who are fully supported by the student and/or spouse and declared on the student’s and/or spouses income tax return; or 3) The student’s and/or spouse’s Court Ordered foster children.

“Dependant Spouse” means a person who is marries to the student or has lived with the student in a common-law relationship for at least one year prior to application for educational support, and who does not receive social assistance to generate income.

“Diploma” is the credential granted for a two-year program (at least four semesters).

“Education Coordinator” refers to the person designated by the Band or Gitksan Government Commission to be in charge of handling post-secondary applications; it may also refer to the person designated by an educational institute to liaise with First Nations students (the position is normally known as “First Nations Education Coordinator”).

“Educational Institute” means community college, university-college, institute, or university, recognized by a Province that offers particular, specialized programs not available elsewhere, generally serving a wide geographic area. Two examples include BCIT, which offer specialized trade programs, and NVIT, which offers programs especially for First Nation student. Educational institutes also grant certificates, diplomas, associate degrees, Baccalaureate (Bachelor’s) degrees and a limited number of Doctoral (PhD) in particular programs.

“Gitksan Government Commission” refers to a sponsoring Society mandated by a Gitksan Band to advise education programs for the Band.

“Executive Director” refers to a Gitksan Government Commission’s chief administrative officer; it may also refer to a Band’s chief administrative officer (equivalent to “Band Manager”).

“Fraud” means a deliberate act of misrepresentation by the student regarding academic or financial disclosure.

“Full Time Student” means a student who is taking four (4) or more courses, or twelve (12) credit hours or equivalent per semester at a post-secondary institution.

“Funded Before/Returning” means an applicant who has previously received finding for a program, and is requesting funding for a new program after a significant absence from education.

“Funding period” refers to the total duration of study, in terms of semester or academic years, that and applicant may receive finding, dependant on the nature of the educational program in which the applicant will be enrolled (See Appendix 1).

“Grants” are financial awards available to students primarily based on need, and are usually sources through government.

“Indigenous Services Canada” or ISC - In August 2017, the Prime Minister announced plans for the dissolution of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the creation of two new departments: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC). This transformation will take time and includes engagement with Indigenous peoples.

“Letter of Acceptance” refers to a letter from the educational institution indicated that the student or applicant has been accepted into an accredited program.

“Letter of Intent” refers to brief cover letter done by the applicant to be included in the applicants completed application package. It should include the student’s long term educational and career goals, how the education program will help the student meet these goals, and a request for funding, based on the Student Budget.

“Living Expenses” refers to the allowable amount of financial assistance available to the student according to the particular circumstances of the student, such as the number of dependants the student is responsible for (see Appendix 3).

“New Student” means an applicant who has not previously applied for the First Nations Post-Secondary Assistance Program.

“Official Transcripts” means the official document given by an institute the record the student’s grades and grade point average. A small fee (usually about \$5.00) may be required by the post-secondary educational institute from students requesting copies of their official transcript. Transcripts given directly to the student are often not “Official Transcripts”. However, some institutions may give the student one official transcript free of charge at the completion of studies. Students should not open a sealed envelope containing official transcripts because an opened transcript will not be accepted by another institution.

“Part Time Student” - means a student who is taking three (3) or less courses or 9 credits or less per semester at a post-secondary institution.

“Practicum” means a supervised and mandatory portion of an educational program emphasizing the practical application of previously learned theory, methods, skills, professionalism, orientation and ethics in a specialized area of study which does not exceed more than 20 percent of the total program. Students must be supervised and evaluated by the employer while doing productive work where no wage is received.

“Program Outline” is the form to be included with the student’s application package. It describes the courses, the course load, and the prerequisites required, as well as listing the name and phone number of the institution’s Education Coordinator.

“Private Post-Secondary Institution” is a Canadian or foreign post-secondary institution which receives the majority of its funding from sources other than governments.

“Scholarships” are financial awards available to students based on academic achievement and financial needs. Sources include government, educational institutions and private foundations or individuals.

“Semester” refers to a part of the academic year, as defined by the post-secondary institution, usually referring to the following three periods: September-December (Fall Semester), January-April (Winter Semester), May-June (Spring Semester) and July-August (Summer Semester).

“Short Term Funding” – means funding supplied for short term courses that are not covered by post secondary funding. (e.g., First Aid, WHMIS, etc. courses that assist in gaining employment).

“Single Parent” means a student who has their children living with them at least two (2) days per week.

“Student” refers to a person who has been accepted into a post-secondary program, and it may refer to an applicant who has applied and been accepted into the Band / Education Society Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program.

“Student Budget” refers to the form (Schedule 2) the applicant must fill out and submit with the application package.

“Student loans” refers to loans for post-secondary students under either the federal Canada Student Loans (CSL) program or the provincial BC Student Assistance Program (BCSAP).

“Study Period” is the time during which a student is attending classes. The start date is the first day of classes; the end date is the month in which the final class or exam occurs, whichever is later. Normally, the study period consists of either one four-month semester or two consecutive four-month semesters. (See “academic year”).

“Termination” means the student no longer qualifies for financial support due to low academic standing, poor attendance, or failure to submit documentation to the Band / Education Society, or Fraud.

“Textbook and supplies support” refers to financial support for textbook and supplies as dictated by the actual program requirements of the educational institution.

“Tuition Support” refers to financial support for tuition and miscellaneous fees students are required to pay according to the actual program requirements of the educational institution.

“Travel Assistance” refers to financial support for the student to travel between his or her normal place of residence and the educational institution (See Appendix 2).

“Village Government” means the same thing as “Band” (or “Indian Band”).

“Wilp” translates into English as “House” and it refers to a matrilineal related extended family, headed by a Simmogit (Hereditary Chief). Each Wilp is aligned with one of the P’deek (clans).

APPENDIX 1

Funding Period Limitations

Assistance can be provided at four levels of Post-Secondary Education

Level 1	Certificate – 1 year Diploma – 2 years
Level 2	Undergraduate Bachelors Degree Program – 2 – 3 years
Level 3	Graduate Degree / Masters or Professional Degree – 1 – 3 years
Level 4	Doctoral Degrees – 1-3 years

level 1 - The member bands are only able to fund students for one (1) year for a certificate, two (2) years for a diploma.

level 2 - To be considered for additional funding, student's programs must ladder into the next level, for additional 2 years of undergraduate degree program.

level 3 - If the student is continuing in the same field, the student can apply for additional funding for an additional 1-3 years for a Masters degree.

level 4 - Students may then apply for funding to achieve their PhD in the same program for an additional 1-3 years.

Examples:

- Teachers require a Bachelor of Education which consists of a four-year under-graduate degree and a two-year post-graduate degree, they may then apply for additional funding for their Masters and PhD in Education.
- A lawyer requires a four -year undergraduate degree and a three-year post graduate degree and then may apply to the bar.
- A doctor also requires seven years to complete the program.

Students may only be funded in each level once.

APPENDIX 2

Travel Assistance Allowance

Travel Assistance Allowance

Location	Time of Year	Amount
Terrace and Prince Rupert	Beginning of Academic Year	\$100.00
	Beginning of Christmas Break	\$100.00
	End of Christmas Break	\$100.00
	End of Academic Year	\$100.00
	TOTAL FOR YEAR	\$400.00
Prince George	Beginning of Academic Year	\$200.00
	Beginning of Christmas Break	\$200.00
	End of Christmas Break	\$200.00
	End of Academic Year	\$200.00
	TOTAL FOR YEAR	\$800.00
Beyond Prince George	Beginning of Academic Year	\$400.00
	Beginning of Christmas Break	\$400.00
	End of Christmas Break	\$400.00
	End of Academic Year	\$400.00
	TOTAL FOR YEAR	\$1,600.00

APPENDIX 3

Living Expense Allowance

Living Expense Allowance

Description	Monthly Allowance
Single student	\$1,400.00
Married and / or Common Law student with employed spouse	\$1,400.00
Married and /or Common Law student with a dependant spouse	\$1,600.00
Each dependent Child	\$250.00

High Rent	
Terrace and Prince Rupert areas	\$150.00
Prince George Area	\$150.00
Vancouver Area	\$150.00
Victoria Area	\$150.00
Kamloops / Merritt	\$150.00