

Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Policy

Approved by Council on June 11, 2025

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Section 1. Introduction

Van Tat Gwich'in iidilii ts'at geenjit dinehtl'eh gwidinadhatl'oo gaoniltin giiniindhan ji' chiisrits'o' goots'at tr'ige'heendal goo'aii. Jii dinehtl'eh akoo dinuu, tthak goots'o' nihk'it tr'igiheendal ts'at gwiinzii gahgeeheedandaii.

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) considers education to be a fundamental right, and as such, will fully support all eligible applicants for post-secondary education financial assistance.

The Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Policy (Policy) was developed to provide VGFN Citizens with post-secondary education financial assistance that is fair, equitable, and transparent; and which supports the education goals of post-secondary students.

Section 2. Scope

Authority:

This policy was issued under the authority of the Chief and Council meeting held on June 11, 2025.

Application:

This Policy applies to Citizens who wish to further their post-secondary education, developmental studies, or trades education.

This Policy does not apply to the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program; formerly called the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), or to employment-related training.

Section 3. Principles and Intent

This Policy is meant to establish and maintain consistent financial assistance criteria and amounts for Citizens who wish to further their post-secondary education.

The Policy will be managed in a transparent, consistent, and fiscally responsible fashion, and applicants will be treated respectfully, fairly, and equitably.

Section 4. Policy Core Objectives

The Policy will ensure the practical and fair administration of the financial assistance program, including the receipt of applications for financial assistance, their review by the VGFN Department of Education and the Disbursement Committee and/or Management Committee, if necessary, the payment of approved financial assistance, and support for students during their education journey.

Section 5. Definitions

“Academic Year” means an eight-month period of study. A four-month period of study is considered one semester or half an academic year.

“Apprenticeship” means a program or position at an accredited educational institution in which a student learns a trade by working under a certified expert.

“Articling Student” means a graduate law student (i.e. with a Bachelor of Law (LLB) or a Doctor of Jurisprudence (JD) degree) who is completing their training and gaining relevant work experience before passing the bar.

“Citizen” means a Citizen of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

“Dependant” means an applicant’s child, whether by birth or adoption, who is seventeen (17) years of age and under or a person who, for medical reasons, is wholly dependant on the applicant as their parent or guardian and is unable to live alone.

“Educational Institution” means an accredited educational institution or facility such as a Vocational or Trade School, College, University, or any other recognized, accepted institution from which the student can obtain a Post-Secondary Education Certificate, Diploma, or University Degree.

“Financial Assistance” means funding provided to an approved applicant, within the following categories:

- tuition;
- cost-of-living;
- textbooks and other course-required materials;
- travel; and
- scholarships.

“Full-Time Student” means a student enrolled in three or more courses (nine credits) per term or enrolled full-time as designated by the educational institution the student is attending.

“Internship” means a work experience for a specific, and limited, period of time; usually offered by an employer for students. An internship may be paid or unpaid.

“Part-Time Student” means a student enrolled in two or less courses (six credits) per term or enrolled part-time as designated by the educational institution the student is attending.

“Practicum” means a program of study through an accredited educational institution that involves working (either for pay or as a volunteer) in one’s area of study and using the knowledge and skills that have been learned in school.

“Tuition” means fees for program or course registration charged by the educational institution once a student is accepted into a program. Tuition includes all fees listed on the tuition statement of the educational institution. Tuition does not include other fees an educational institution may charge before a student is accepted, such as the cost of registering on-line with the institution.

Section 6. Policy Provisions

A. Eligibility Criteria

1. Citizens are eligible for post-secondary education financial assistance if they:
 - have been accepted or are enrolled in a program of study at a recognized educational institution;
 - are not in arrears to VGFN in relation to past or current financial assistance under this policy; or are in a repayment agreement with VGFN;
 - If an application is denied based on the applicant being in arrears, the applicant may appeal the denial of their application. For more details see Section 6.I. (Appeal Process).
 - maintain a passing grade (as defined by the educational institution or program) in all courses; and
 - are in good academic standing (as defined by the educational institution).
2. Whether or not a Citizen is Indian status as defined by the Government of Canada’s *Indian Act* does not affect a Citizen’s eligibility or financial assistance under this Policy. However, VGFN may collect information on Citizens’ Indian status for negotiating purposes.

B. General Elements

1. Financial assistance and scholarships are dependent on approved annual budgets. All financial assistance will be awarded based on the recommendations of VGFN’s Department of Education (the Department) and/or the Disbursement Committee.
2. Students accepted into a multi-year program of study only have to apply for financial assistance once. Approved students do not need to re-apply each year; however, transcripts and confirmation of enrollment must be provided to the Department yearly.
3. Financial assistance is provided to help offset various costs in support of Citizens furthering their education. This assistance is not meant to cover 100% of the costs that students may incur.
4. Financial assistance is not provided for:
 - The cost of registering with an educational institution, prior to being accepted into a course of study; and
 - If there are special circumstances under which an applicant is unable to pay the registration cost, the applicant may appeal in accordance with Section 6.I (Appeal Process).

- expenses incurred after the program of study has been completed.
5. Students are to seek financial assistance from other sources and agencies. Normally this will not impact the amount of financial assistance students are eligible for through this Policy.
 - Students are advised to apply to the Yukon government's Student Financial Assistance Program, which provides financial assistance through several programs – e.g. Yukon Grant (including a travel grant), Student Training Allowance.
 6. The duration of financial assistance will be in accordance with the length of the program the student is enrolled in as defined by the educational institution. Generally, length of programs are as follows:
 - two (2) years for upgrading;
 - two (2) years for certificate and/or diploma programs;
 - four (4) years for undergraduate studies;
 - four (4) years for professional programs (e.g. medicine, nursing, veterinary sciences, dentistry, law);
 - two (2) years for master's studies;
 - four (4) years for doctoral studies; and
 - four (4) years for trades training.
 7. A student may not receive financial assistance once they have exceeded the time limit for completion of their program as defined by the educational institution. If a student wishes to begin another program after their time limit has expired, they must submit an appeal in accordance with Section 6.I. (Appeal Process).

C. Application Process

1. Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications as early as possible to allow for proper review by the Department and if necessary, by the Disbursement Committee. Additionally, many educational institutions require sponsorship forms to be completed well ahead of the program start date.
2. To process applications, the Department requires applicants to submit:
 - a completed application form;
 - a copy of their acceptance letter;
 - a copy of their course registration (to confirm the applicant is enrolled and to determine if the applicant is a full time or part time student);
 - direct deposit information (for applicants to receive payment from VGFN for financial assistance); and
 - if applicable, proof of dependants.

3. Application forms are available from the VGFN Education office in Old Crow, at the VGFN office in Whitehorse, or on the [VGFN website](#).
4. If requested, and where possible, the Department will assist applicants in applying for financial assistance under the Policy.
5. Applications that are missing information will be considered incomplete and will not be considered for review by the Department until any missing information is provided.
6. Applicants are encouraged to complete and submit their application to the Department by the following dates; early applications are welcome:
 - Fall programs: July 1
 - Winter programs: November 1
 - Summer programs: April 15
 - Alice Frost Community Campus: Year-round
7. Applicants may submit applications at any time; however, late applications may need to be deferred to the next cycle due to the deadlines set by the educational institution, or an applicant's financial assistance may be delayed.

D. Financial Assistance

1. All financial assistance amounts are provided in accordance with Appendix A.
2. Tuition costs are based on invoices from the educational institution and the maximum financial assistance for tuition amounts is outlined in Appendix A.
 - Tuition is paid directly to the educational institution.
3. The cost-of-living allowance is provided for every month the student is enrolled in courses, including months of partial enrollment.
4. Part-time students are eligible for a pro-rated cost-of-living allowance. If there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. family or medical reasons), which require the student to take a part-time course load on a temporary basis (maximum one academic year), part-time students may be eligible for the full cost-of-living allowance.
5. Financial assistance in the cost-of-living category is not meant to cover all costs that a student may incur. It is meant to be a contribution to help offset the cost of accommodation, food, local travel (bus or parking passes), and other incidental costs for which an educational institution may charge a fee (such as providing a printed transcript).

6. For students with dependents, additional financial assistance is provided in accordance with Appendix A. To receive such financial assistance, students must provide documentation that proves the relationship between the student and dependent, for example:
 - documentation of adoption;
 - documentation of guardianship;
 - verification from Revenue Canada; or
 - other proof may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
7. Students must disclose to the Department any other financial assistance they receive for dependents.
8. Financial assistance for textbooks and other required course materials is provided to students:
 - through the educational institution's sponsorship form as credits at the campus bookstore; or
 - in special circumstances, as a reimbursement once the student has submitted their receipts to the Department.
9. Post-course (or post-graduation) materials and work clothing are not eligible for financial assistance. For more details see Section 6.B. (General Elements).
10. Travel rates are based on where the student's home residence is and the location of their educational institution.
 - Two (2) return tickets (i.e. two round trips) are funded per school year – one at the start and end of the year and another for Christmas or other designated break in studies.
 - To receive this financial assistance, the student must complete the trips.
11. If the financial assistance amounts in this Policy are not sufficient for the student to pursue their chosen field of study at their chosen post-secondary educational institution, the student may request to receive additional financial assistance above the amounts in this Policy.
 - If appropriate, the Department may forward the student's request for additional financial assistance to the Disbursement Committee. When reviewing the request, the Disbursement Committee will consider:
 - the location of the student's post-secondary educational institution;
 - cost of the program of study; and
 - any extenuating circumstances (i.e. medical or family issues).
 - The Disbursement Committee will make a recommendation regarding the request for additional financial assistance to the Management Committee.
 - The Management Committee will consider the request and provide the final decision to the Department.

E. Scholarships

1. Students studying for a certificate, diploma, or degree may be eligible for a scholarship in accordance with Appendix A providing they are a full-time student and have a minimum grade point average of 3.0.
2. Students will automatically be eligible for a VGFN scholarship once they submit their transcript to the Department by the deadline. No application form is required.
 - The deadline for submitting transcripts for consideration of a scholarship is October 1 (as the scholarships are awarded based on grades obtained in the previous academic year).
3. Scholarships will be awarded once a year.

F. Practicums, Apprenticeships, Internships, and Articling

1. Students whose course of study requires them to complete a practicum, apprenticeship, or internship; or which requires them to article in law, are eligible for the monthly cost-of-living allowance for the duration of that period.
2. Reasonable, additional expenses anticipated for such courses of study (e.g. specialized equipment or clothing; required travel) will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. Students seeking financial assistance in this category must submit a letter of request and proof of the practicum, apprenticeship, internship, or articling program to the Department.

G. Changing Fields or Career Goals

1. Students who wish to change their field of study or career goals must provide a written explanation for the planned change to the Department.
2. Students are encouraged to discuss any changes to their career plans with the Department.
3. When considering a change to their field of study, students should be aware of the maximum number of years of financial assistance available, as described in Section 6.B. (General Elements).
4. Students should be aware that significant changes to their field of study or educational institution may result in changes to their eligibility or financial assistance (e.g. travel) under this Policy.

H. Suspension or Termination of Financial Assistance

1. If a student's performance is unsatisfactory or if a student commits an act of fraud, their financial assistance under the Policy may be terminated.
2. Unsatisfactory performance includes:
 - failed courses;

- unexcused or extended absences from classes;
- suspension or withdrawal from courses;
- failure to maintain good standing (as defined by the educational institution); and/or
- being on academic probation.

3. Fraud includes:

- making a false declaration on the Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Application Form; and/or
- failing to disclose a change in circumstance (i.e. suspension, withdrawal).

4. In cases of unsatisfactory performance, the Department will:

- provide the student with a written warning, including the reason for the warning and the time period in which the student may rectify the situation;
- monitor and re-evaluate at the end of the time period; and
- if the situation persists, the Department may terminate financial assistance for the current term and future committed financial assistance may be withdrawn.

5. In cases of fraud, the Department will:

- provide written notification to the student that their financial assistance will be paused;
- pause the student's financial assistance; and
- depending on the severity of the fraud, the Department will determine if the student's financial assistance is to be terminated or reassessed at a different amount.

6. The student shall inform the Department in writing if they are suspended, released, or will not be returning to school for any other reason.

7. Students who are suspended or released, or who do not complete their current studies may be required to reimburse VGFN for the amount received and may not be considered for further financial assistance under the Policy.

8. The Department has the discretion to waive the reimbursement requirement if the recipient can justify why the course or program was not completed (i.e. medical or family reasons), provided the student informs the Department as soon as practical.

I. Appeal Process

1. Should an applicant disagree with the Department's decision, they have the right to appeal the decision to the Disbursement Committee and the Management Committee. The appeal procedure is as follows:

- the applicant must submit an appeal to the Department in writing;
 - The appeal must include the reason for appealing. Students are encouraged to include details of any extenuating circumstances (i.e. medical or family issues) that may affect their eligibility for financial assistance.
- the Department will forward the appeal to the Disbursement Committee;
- when considering an appeal, the Disbursement Committee will consider:
 - an applicant's extenuating circumstances (e.g. medical or family reasons);
 - any demonstrated effort towards pursuing post-secondary education or chosen career path (e.g. completion of relevant certificate/program, volunteer activities);
 - any financial assistance that has previously been terminated or suspended; and
 - the applicant's arrears to VGFN in relation to past or current financial assistance under this Policy.
- the Disbursement Committee will provide their recommendation to the Management Committee;
- the Management Committee will consider the appeal and provide the final decision to the Department where possible, within fourteen (14) days of receiving the appeal; and
 - Management Committee may request that Chief and Council review the appeal.
- the Department will provide the final decision to the applicant in writing.

Section 7. Roles and Responsibilities

Chief and Council – are responsible for:

- approving the Policy and any subsequent amendments; and
- upon request from the Management Committee, reviewing appeals.

Management Committee – is responsible for:

- reviewing the Disbursement Committee's recommendations on appeals and requests for additional financial assistance; and
- providing a decision to the Department regarding appeals and requests for additional financial assistance received from the Disbursement Committee.

The Disbursement Committee – is responsible for:

- upon request from the Department, making recommendations on applications that are unclear and/or that do not meet the requirements of the Policy;
- reviewing requests for additional financial assistance forwarded by the Department and making recommendations regarding such requests to the Management Committee;

- reviewing appeals forwarded by the Department and making recommendations regarding such appeals to the Management Committee; and
- as needed, making recommendations to Chief and Council on amendments to the Policy.

Department of Education – is responsible for:

- administering the Policy, including:
 - providing information to applicants and students receiving financial assistance;
 - receiving, reviewing, and processing applications;
 - seeking recommendations from the Disbursement Committee on applications that are unclear or do not meet the requirements of the Policy;
 - forwarding appeals and requests for additional financial assistance from applicants to the Disbursement Committee;
 - maintaining a database of approved applicants to document financial assistance provided, receipt of transcripts, continued enrollment, etc.; and
 - supporting applicants with the application process upon request.

Applicants/Students – are responsible for:

- submitting completed applications and providing any missing information in a timely fashion;
- once approved for financial assistance, providing required information (e.g. transcripts) in a timely fashion; and
- if necessary, submitting any appeal in accordance with 6.I. (Appeal Process) and/or requests for additional financial assistance in accordance with Section D (Financial Assistance), policy provision eleven (11).

Section 8. Review

Annual reviews will be conducted at the end of the calendar year. The financial assistance amounts outlined in Appendix A shall be reviewed annually by the Department (with the assistance of Finance), taking into account:

- cost-of-living increases to reflect inflation;
- feedback from students;
- current tuition costs from across Canada for various programs (undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses of study); and current airfare costs.

Upon completion of the annual review, a proposal, including the updated Appendix A, will be forwarded to Management Committee recommending:

- approval to increase the cost-of-living allowance; and/or
- any increase to the financial assistance amounts over and above the cost-of-living allowance increase.

Section 9. Appendix A

2025 Financial Assistance Amounts		
Financial Assistance Category	Amounts	
Tuition and Course Fees	Undergraduate	Up to \$7,500 per term (to a maximum of \$15,000 per year)
	Post-graduate and professional studies	Funded up to 100%
Cost-of-Living	Cost-of-Living – Full-time Students	\$1300 per month
	Cost-of-Living – Part-time Students	Prorated according to course load
	Additional financial assistance for dependants	\$550 for one dependant \$1100 for two dependants \$1650 for three dependants \$275 for each additional dependant
Textbooks & Other Required Materials, Equipment, or Clothing	Full-time Students	Up to \$900 per term/semester
	Part-time Students	Up to \$450 per term/semester
Travel	Full-time or part-time students, studying within resident province or territory, outside 300 km radius (e.g. a student's residence is in Old Crow and they are studying in Whitehorse; or they are resident in Vancouver and are attending college in Prince George.)	\$2000 per year
	Full-time or part-time students, studying outside their resident province or territory (e.g. a student's residence is in Vancouver, and they are attending university in Toronto).	\$4,000 per year
	For full-time and part-time students, resident of Old Crow, studying outside the Yukon.	\$6,000 per year
Scholarships	GPA of 3.0–4.33 (B to A)	\$2500 per year