

## **Guidelines for the Awarding of SGS Fellowships and Graduate Student Support**

**Preamble:** Graduate student financial support plays a vital role in the recruitment and retention of top-tier graduate students to Memorial University. The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Fellowships are a major contributor to graduate student financial support, contributing to their living and tuition expenses. The SGS Fellowships also provide essential financial leverage for faculty supervisor success with Tri-Council agency or other external funding competitions, and are fundamental for new graduate program development, credibility and competitiveness.

Graduate students who have adequate support through SGS Fellowships and other sources have the opportunity to fully engage with their programs, and are often the leaders of Memorial University's research, learning and engagement activities. SGS Fellowships contribute to competitive financial packages and make possible the very things we celebrate in our graduate students: cutting-edge research, innovative teaching, community involvement and public engagement.

### **1. General principles**

- 1.1.** SGS funds for the awarding of SGS Fellowships will be allocated to academic units by the Dean of Graduate Studies on a fiscal-year (April 1- March 31) basis for the support of their graduate students according to the following guidelines. SGS will strive for equitable allocation of Fellowship funds to all academic units for each eligible student.
- 1.2.** SGS Fellowships are intended to form the foundation of graduate student support, a foundation that academic units should make every effort to supplement through Graduate Assistantships, external and/or internal grant applications, and/or supervisor grant or contract support. SGS will strive to maximize Fellowship support for students to make financial packages more competitive.

Recommendations for awarding SGS Fellowships must be forwarded to SGS for approval and disbursement according to the criteria and procedures below.

### **2. Student Eligibility Criteria**

- 2.1.** Students entering their programs must be registered as full-time in a SGS fellowship-supported Masters (thesis-based) or PhD program and hold a valid Canadian study permit.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2.** Students entering their programs must normally have and maintain an overall MUN, or equivalent, average of 75%. An overall MUN, or equivalent, average of 75% is determined by using either the last 20 attempted courses for which grades are available, or by using all courses attempted for which grades are available excluding those in the first year of an undergraduate program. In the spirit of holistic assessment of incoming students that do not satisfy these academic criteria, exceptional cases will be considered for SGS Fellowship funding with a letter of support from the academic unit that highlights other strengths of the applicant and/or provides some context for their prior academic standing.

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<sup>1</sup> A full-time graduate student cannot commit more than 24 hours per week to employment. Any changes in a student's registration status will normally be made for a minimum of one semester. Normally, only one such change in status will be permitted in any one semester.

- 2.3.** If departments wish to allocate SGS Fellowships to students who are not already on SGS fellowship funding and who are in-program, those students must normally have successfully completed at least one full semester of graduate studies and achieved a mark of at least 75% in each program course attempted or an overall average of at least 80% for all program courses attempted. Where the number of program courses is less than two, then the requirement is evidence of academic standing acceptable to the Dean on the recommendation of the academic unit.
- 2.4.** Master's students must be in the first 12 program-months for a one-year program and in the first 24 program-months of all other programs, excluding any leave periods.
- 2.5.** PhD students must be within the first 48 program-months, excluding any leave periods.
- 2.6.** Master's students who transfer (or "fast-track") into a PhD program must be within the first 60 program-months of their entire graduate registration at Memorial, excluding any leave period.
- 2.7.** In exceptional cases, an academic unit may recommend an extension of SGS Fellowship eligibility for one additional semester beyond the periods outlined in 2.4 and 2.5 above.
- 2.8.** A student who is the recipient of a major scholarship or award, and as a result is ineligible for a SGS Fellowship under 2.9 (below), may be recommended in exceptional circumstances for a SGS Fellowship for one semester beyond the periods outlined in 2.4 and 2.5 above.
- 2.9.** SGS Fellowships may not be awarded to Master's students receiving in excess of \$35,000 per annum from all sources in a program year, excluding Graduate Assistantships. SGS Fellowships may not be awarded to PhD students receiving in excess of \$50,000 per annum from all sources in a program year, excluding Graduate Assistantships<sup>2</sup>.

### **3. Procedures for awarding SGS Fellowships (for students meeting eligibility)**

- 3.1.** SGS Fellowships will normally be offered at the time of admission for a one-year period. Details should be specified in the "Program of Study" form. If the admission is deferred, the SGS Fellowship may, on the recommendation of the academic unit, be deferred for a maximum of three semesters.
- 3.2.** SGS Fellowships are renewable subject to the eligibility criteria (Section 2) and, in the case of thesis students, satisfactory annual progress reports. SGS Fellowships will normally be renewed at a value which is at least equal to that received in the offer of admission.
- 3.3.** On commencement of a semester, academic units may recommend allocation of

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<sup>2</sup>The following SGS special awards may be exchanged for SGS fellowships: A.G. Hatcher Memorial Scholarship, F.A. Aldrich Fellowship, The Honourable Dr. John. C. Crosbie Doctoral Scholarship (Philosophy).

uncommitted or previously committed SGS funds that become available to:

- applicants, newly admitted students, or in-program students who were not offered SGS Fellowship support;
- in-program students who did not meet eligibility criteria on admission but are being reconsidered on the basis of improved performance as in 2.3; or,
- increase SGS Fellowship support to in-program students. Normally, such allocations will not be retroactive and will be in effect for the remainder of the student's eligible funding period, subject to renewal as in 2.4 and 2.5 above.

Students receiving SGS Fellowships who transfer (or "fast-track") from a Master's program to a PhD program shall receive the standard SGS fellowship amount awarded to Master's vs. PhD students currently in place in the student's academic unit of record. These funds are normally not retroactive, but are available at the beginning of the semester in which the student transferred. The cost will be attributed to the academic unit's SGS fellowship allocation.

#### **4. Administration of graduate student support (regardless of source)**

- 4.1.** Graduate student support is paid bi-weekly. Academic units are responsible for initiating payments to students (including renewals) by submission of a Graduate Student Support Payroll form. It is also the responsibility of the academic unit to stop payments to students by means of the same form (e.g., program completed, leave of absence, academic standing, etc.).
- 4.2.** Recommendations for adjustments to the level or source(s) of bi-weekly funding received by any student must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies prior to the beginning of the semester in which these changes will take effect. Changes in SGS Fellowship amounts will normally remain in effect for the remainder of the student's eligibility period.
- 4.3.** Lump sum payments from sources other than the SGS Fellowship allocation may be made at any time, but will result in an adjustment of SGS Fellowship amounts for the program year if limitations in 2.9 above are exceeded.

#### **5. Externally-funded Students**

Students who apply to Memorial University as self-funded, non-Canadian government funded or funded by other unique sources require careful consideration by both the academic unit and SGS prior to admission. Although some international funding programs provide consistent (as-promised) funding to students for the full program duration, there is a genuine concern about inconsistent or sudden cessation of funding. Furthermore, self-funded students may underestimate the overall tuition and living costs in NL, leading to crisis scenarios and the need for emergency funds from supervisors, academic units and SGS. SGS strongly recommends contingency funding sources are secured and agreed upon by supervisors and academic units before students are admitted under a unique and externally funded model.

#### **6. Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate Assistantships (GA) are an integral part of graduate student funding. The remuneration for GA duties forms a portion of the student's financial support, and is normally awarded and paid on a semester basis. The duties to be performed by a student holding a GA will be assigned by the academic unit. Normally, a GA unit consists of 56 hours of work over a 14-week period within a semester (i.e., an average of 4 hours per week). GAs are governed by the Teaching Assistants' Union of Memorial University of Newfoundland (TAUMUN) Collective Agreement which is available online at:

[https://www.mun.ca/taumun/collective\\_agreement/](https://www.mun.ca/taumun/collective_agreement/)

## **7. Review**

These guidelines will be reviewed every three years by the Dean of Graduate Studies in consultation with an *ad hoc* advisory committee with representation from the faculties of arts, science, medicine, engineering, a professional unit and the Graduate Students' Union (GSU).

Revised October 2021