



POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

Administration Manual
July 4, 2012

Amended & Ratified
May 2014
August 2016

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

MANDATE:

The mandate of the post-secondary student program is to support Sweetgrass First Nation Treaty/Status Indians to gain access to post-secondary education and to graduate with the qualifications and skills needed to pursue individual careers and to contribute to the achievement of Indian self-government and economic self-reliance.

The policy provides financial support to the Treaty status Indians from the Sweetgrass First Nation, herein referred to as the Sweetgrass Post-Secondary Education Program.

This policy replaces the Battlefords Tribal Council Post-Secondary Education Support Program Administration Manual dated June 1994 and the May 2014 Sweetgrass Post-secondary Education Program Support policies.

The policy includes the University and College Entrance Preparation Program (UCEP), which has been operating since 1983.

This policy shall be reviewed by the Sweetgrass Education Committee at least once every 2 years prior to the Fall student intake/orientation. Recommendations for the policy amendments will be forwarded to Chief and Council for ratification.

Post-Secondary Education students will be provided with a copy of this manual upon application to the Post-Secondary Education Program or upon amendments to the Policy Manual.

DEFINITIONS

- a) "Treaty/Status Indian" means a person whose name has been entered into the Indian Register in accordance with the Indian Act and/or a person recognized as possessing band membership status in accordance with the laws of Sweetgrass First Nation.
- b) "Post-Secondary Education" means a program of studies offered by an accredited post-secondary institution, for which completion of secondary school studies or its equivalent is a prerequisite.
- c) "Program of Studies" includes all post-secondary programs, at least one academic year in duration, leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree. Programs which are less than one academic year but are pre-requisites to post-secondary programs of at least one academic year in duration are included. (i.e., Pre-Law)
- d) "Post-Secondary Institutions" are degree, diploma and certificate granting institutions which are recognized by a province and include educational institutions affiliated with or delivering accredited post-secondary education.
- e) "Canadian Public Institutions" are post-secondary institutions which receive the majority of its funding from federal and provincial governments.

- f) "Private Post-Secondary Institutions" are Canadian or foreign post-secondary institutions which receives the majority of its funding from sources other than governments.
- g) "Academic Year" is as defined by the post-secondary institutions but will not be less than eight months duration.
- h) "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.
- i) "Dependent" means a person who is dependent upon the student who does not receive employment or S.A. income. This definition may include a residency provision whereby a "dependent" has to be living with and supported by the student.
- j) "Immediate Family" includes spouse, son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchild, grandparents, and foster parents.

SECTION 1: STUDENT APPLICATIONS

The Post-Secondary Student Support Program provides financial support to eligible Treaty/Status Indians who are members of Sweetgrass First Nation to support the costs of their post-secondary education. Sponsorship will be provided pending availability of resources.

PROCEDURES

1. RECEIVING APPLICATIONS

Applications for financial support received by Sweetgrass First Nation Post-Secondary Education Program must include as a minimum:

- a) a completed application form issued by Sweetgrass First Nation
- b) documented proof of identification (a status card)
- c) documented proof of acceptance or of conditional acceptance into a post-secondary program of studies
- d) student must have a grade twelve or equivalent to grade twelve (GED); copies of transcripts are required before funding will be provided.

The Post-Secondary Education Program must verify the applicant's status number with Band's Indian Registry program.

Applications must be date-stamped on receipt.

Applications lacking the above documentation will not be processed until all documentation is received. Applications will be held, and students notified of lack of information.

Sweetgrass First Nation Post-Secondary Education Program will make every effort to assist applications to complete the applications.

Sweetgrass First Nation Post-Secondary Education Program may request additional documents or information after receipt of application.

2. APPLICATION DEADLINES

- a) For September (Fall/January [winter]) enrollment – **MAY 31**
- b) For Intersession and Summer Session Admission – **MARCH 31**

Applications received prior to the above dates will be prioritized according to the Sweetgrass First Nation student priority categories. (See Funding Priorities)

Applications received after above deadlines will be held until it can be determined if funds are available. If funds are not available, students must reapply the following year for sponsorship.

3. DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT

The amount of support for each applicant will be calculated and recorded on that part of the application form designated for Sweetgrass First Nation use. Calculations will be made for:

- a) Tuition fees
- b) Text/Books support
- c) Support for living expenses where applicable; and
- d) Scholarships (where applicable)

4. NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANTS

When an application is approved or rejected, applicants will be informed in writing of the support approved or the reasons for rejecting the application. Applicants will be informed, within a reasonable time, after the deadline date.

5. FUNDING

- a) Funds will only be provided to the student when:
 - The application is complete.
 - The funding is approved.
 - All documents are provided.
 - The application and funding are approved by motion of Sweetgrass Chief and Council
 - No greater than 30 days prior to the commencement of the approved post-secondary education program.
- b) Sweetgrass First Nation will establish a monthly schedule of payments to students.
- c) Sweetgrass First Nation will require the student to verify that he/she is continuing in the program of studies upon request upon any change in circumstance, or at the end of each academic semester or year (and as per application timeframes)

- d) Sweetgrass First Nation will suspend payments:
- on notice from the student that he/she has dropped out of the program of studies; or
 - if the student fails to verify that he/she is continuing in the program of studies, upon request.
 - if on the student has been required to discontinue from their Institution of study
 - if the student becomes less than full time as defined by the institution.
- e) Sweetgrass First Nation may take action to reclaim funds from the student in respect of tuition allowances and living allowances for periods of support when the student has not been in their course of studies. Where a student has an overpayment, education assistance will not be provided until the overpayment has been cleared or satisfactory arrangements have been made for a minimum monthly repayment plan. Where fraudulent action is suspected, a student may be charged with fraud.
- f) Students with special needs (i.e., physical disabled persons) requiring additional assistance related to their post-secondary programs shall have their request considered on an individual basis and by the guidelines of the Disability Council of Canada.

SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. STUDENT STATUS

To be eligible to apply for support under the Post-secondary Education program, an applicant:

- a) Must be treaty/status Indian who is a member of Sweetgrass First Nation.
- b) Must have met university or college entrance requirements and have been enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a post-secondary institution for a program of studies; and
- c) Must have a grade twelve or equivalent to grade twelve.

Support will be provided within the limits of funds in accordance with the Sweetgrass First Nation funding arrangement with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

2. APPLICATION PRIORITIES

See Section 8: Funding Priorities

SECTION 3: TUITION SUPPORT AND BOOKS/TEXTS SUPPORT

1. Support will be provided for the following:

- Regular tuition fees: that is, the tuition fees normally charged by the institution, to Canadian students.
- Mandatory activity, special testing fees as indicated in the institution's calendar, including student activity fees and special testing fees.
- Registration for other program activities, e.g., admission interview, practicum, tutorials, and initial professional certification, and various examination fees.

- Other mandatory fees may be approved.
 - Cost of books and supplies which are required by the post-secondary institution.
 - Monthly computer allowance of \$50.00 (to cover maintenance costs – e.g.: ink/internet fees – paper)
 - If own-source funding is available, a laptop computer allowance of \$1000.00 for purchase of computer/hardware/printer. This is a one-time purchase per student under sponsorship.
 - It is incumbent upon students to inform Sweetgrass First Nation of all costs.
2. The applicant will provide documentary evidence of tuition, registration, and mandatory student activity fees.
 3. Sweetgrass First Nation may provide up to \$300/semester for books and supplies for full-time students, based on documentation of required books/texts or supplies.
 4. An amount in excess of \$300/semester may be approved if a student demonstrates need by submitting copies of the course outline and a quote, or receipts by the institution's bookstore or suppliers if requiring a reimbursement.
 5. Part-time students will be eligible for tuition fees and required books/texts only.
 6. Students enrolled in correspondence or other distance education courses may qualify for tuition fees and books/texts assistance as required by the institution.
 7. Tuition at Foreign Institutions:

PROCEDURE

- a) Students attending private or foreign post-secondary institutions may be eligible for tuition support at no higher than the rate charged by the public institution nearest to the student's Canadian place of residence which offers a comparable program at the time of application.
 - b) Students enrolled in foreign institutions may be eligible for tuition support at the actual tuition rate charged by the foreign institution where no comparable program is available at an institution in Canada. The onus for showing that no comparable Canadian program is available will be on the student.
8. Private institutions will not be funded.

SECTION 4: SUPPORT FOR LIVING EXPENSES

Support for living expenses is expected to cover such costs as food, shelter, damage deposit, daycare fees, utilities, and personal needs. Rates for student living allowance will be established each fiscal year by Sweetgrass Chief and Council based on the availability of funding and within permissible rate structures as may be settled by INAC from time to time.

PROCEDURE

- a) Sweetgrass First Nation will use the rates in Appendix 1 for the administration of the program.
- b) The living allowance will be paid in Canadian dollars regardless of the location of the institution.

- c) Living allowances are paid for Christmas and study breaks, but not for summer months or semesters in which the student does not consider to be enrolled in full-time studies.
- d) Travel costs: student is eligible for one round trip per academic year to attend college.

SECTION 5: LIMITS OF SUPPORT

1. Support for post-secondary expenses will be provided for five levels of post-secondary education and limits are placed on the duration of support according to the level of program the student is enrolled in.

Level 1 Community College Technical (2-year program leading to, at minimum, a diploma)

Level 2 University College entrance or prep programs (1 – 2 semesters)

Level 3 Under Graduate Programs. e.g. - B.A., B. Ed., B. SCI.

Level 4 Professional Programs. e.g. - LLB, MD

Level 5 Graduate Programs. e.g. - Masters, PhD (depending upon program and is in institution, to be dealt with on individual basis)

2. Funding can be considered if a student moves from a higher-level program and goes to a lower-level program provided the higher-level program has not been completed.
3. 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, as long as the student is in satisfactory academic standing at the institution as per the institution's definition of satisfactory academic standing.
4. Based on available funding, support for tuition and required books/texts will only be considered for funding support. Level 5 funding arrangements will be dealt with on an individual basis and arrangements will depend upon the program and institution. If a student resumes the higher level, the previous time spent at that level will be counted for support purposes.

Support at any level will only be provided for one area of study.

5. Students who have completed a Level 2 program (U.E.P.) with or without support from this program are ineligible for lower-level program support.
6. Students who have completed a higher-level program, with or without support from this program, are ineligible for lower-level program support.
7. Students who become eligible for support and who have previously completed a portion of post-secondary studies without support from this program will receive support for the balance of their program of studies in accordance with 3 and 4.
8. Support will be approved for a university academic year which is normally eight months. On-campus students may be supported in intersession/summer school if funding permits. Students for whom intersession or summer school attendance is a compulsory aspect of their program will receive normal levels of support for these sessions.

Support for students attending other post-secondary institutions, e.g., Sask Polytechnic, will be for the normal academic year as set by the institution. Students will be required to re-apply for support annually. Support will be approved on an individual basis for third and fourth-year students for spring/intersession pending availability of funds.

9. Employer-sponsored students will not be eligible for additional funding if sponsorship exceeds or equals living allowance rates as set out in PSSSP Guidelines, but if the sponsored student receives less than the rates set out, Sweetgrass First Nation may provide the difference to the maximum that the student is entitled to receive.
10. Incentives: For funded students only (an OSR policy will be considered for non-funded students) Sponsored member incentive will be issued with the year of convocation.
 - a) Diploma \$300 (effective August 2016)
 - b) Undergraduate Degree \$500.00
 - c) Graduate Degree \$1000.00

SECTION 6: SUPPORT FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS

Part time students may receive support for tuition and books/texts as required by the post-secondary institution.

Part time students do not qualify for living allowance.

PROCEDURE

- a) Part time students will be supported provided their program of studies is at least 2 years in duration and leads to a diploma or a degree.
- b) Part time students will be supported if funding is available for tuition and books/texts.

SECTION 7: APPEAL PROCESS

To ensure fairness an equitable treatment under this policy, a student may request an appeal due to a variety of circumstances.

PROCEDURE

1. Notification from the student in writing to the Sweetgrass Post-secondary Education program of an intent to appeal:
 - a) This will include name, address, phone number, institution attended, and programs of studies enrolled in
 - b) Reason for appeal
 - c) Name, address, and phone number of three possible student representatives

2. Sweetgrass First Nation Education Committee will schedule an appeal hearing and call to assemble the Education Appeals Committee members within 7 days of receiving the appeal. The student has a right to attend the appeal hearing in person, but no professional legal counsel will be permitted to appeal hearings.
3. The Education Appeals Committee is to arrive at a recommendation within 5 days of the hearing based on the documentation and information presented.
4. The Education Appeal Committee will put forward its recommendation on the appeal to Education Committee for review and to Chief and Council for ratification.
5. The student and administering organization are to be notified in writing of the decision within 5 days of ratification of the recommendation; and
6. Decisions of the Education Appeals Committee, as ratified by Chief and Council, are final. The student may not appeal to FSIN or the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (INAC).

APPEALS COMMITTEE

An Education Appeal Committee will be appointed by Sweetgrass First Nation Education Committee and shall consist of: a member of the Sweetgrass Chief and Council (normally the Education Portfolio), an Education Committee representative, an Elder, and a student representative selected from a list of at least 3 students submitted by the appealing student. An effort shall be made to select members who are knowledgeable about this policy.

The appealing student may state their case to the Education Appeals Committee if they choose.

SECTION 8: STUDENT FUNDING PRIORITIES

In reviewing complete application packages for post-secondary support funding, applications will be prioritized as follows:

1. CONTINUING STUDENTS

Continuing students are those students who have already obtained sponsorship from Sweetgrass First Nation in the semester immediately preceding the new application period. These students will be allowed to continue providing they have passed at least 80% or maintain a satisfactory GPA. They must also submit documentation that indicates the prescribed courses that will contribute to the completion of a degree. The student will be allowed to continue if they have not exhausted student months;

and

NEW STUDENTS WITH THE GRADE 12

Those students with higher averages will be given first priority.

2. NEW MATURE STUDENTS

- a) Students who are returning after completing Diploma Program and continuing into

undergraduate degree in the same area of study. (e.g.: student completed LPN and continues into the bachelor's degree program in Nursing.) (e.g.: student has a diploma in administration and returning for undergraduate degree in the same area of study.)

- b) Mature students are those students that are 21 years of age and have successfully completed university entrance exams. Students must be registered in four classes.

3. POST-GRADUATE DEGREE STUDENTS

Advanced or professional degree programs for returning graduate level students. (e.g.: master's level or PhD.)

4. STUDENTS REQUIRED TO DISCONTINUE, STUDENTS WHO DROPPED OUT, AND STUDENTS WHO FAILED.

***Are required to wait two academic years before re-applying for funding**

Following the 2-year waiting period, priority will be given to those students who are forced to discontinue because of problems. (i.e., family breakdown, death, medical)

Those with the most student months completed will be considered first.

Last priority will be dropouts or students with failing grades.

- 5. The Sweetgrass Post- Secondary Education Program will maintain a wait-list of student applications for a period of one year or until the next application deadline only.

SECTION 9: STUDENT REGISTRY

The Sweetgrass Post-Secondary Education Program is responsible for maintaining a student registry. The Sweetgrass Post-Secondary Education Program will maintain documentation with respect to support provided. Disclosure of this information requires the informed consent of the student.

Sweetgrass Post-Secondary Education Program will maintain a student registry for the statistical submission purposes to INAC Education Branch as required by the post-secondary education data and information system.

APPENDIX 1

FUNDING SUPPORT LEVELS

(As set by Sweetgrass Chief and Council - August 2016)

Living Allowance:

Single (No Dependents)	\$1,250.00/month
With Dependents	\$1,350.00/month
Per Dependent - Capped at 3 (17 years & under)	\$300.00/month