



**GRADUATE
STUDENT SOCIETY**
UBC VANCOUVER

GSS GSFA + HSA Policy

Last revision: June 2024

1 General

- 1.1 The Objective of the GSFA and HSA Policy is to house all policies and procedures related to the GSFA and HSA, previously found in the Graduate Student Society (GSS) Policy Manual. This manual will be available online at all times and can be accessed by anyone.
- 1.2 All Policies and Procedures in this manual are an extension of the GSS Policies as defined by Bylaw 13. All changes must be made in accordance with the GSS Policies. Recommended changes shall be brought to the Code and Policy Committee to ensure correct wording and that no conflicts in policy will be created. Policy changes will be brought to GSS Council in the usual manner of Policy changes as per GSS Policies.

2 Abbreviations and Definitions

AMS	Alma Mater Society
Centre	Graduate Student Centre of The University of British Columbia - Vancouver
FO	Financial Officer
GM	General Manager
GSFA	Graduate Student Financial Aid
HSA	Housing Security Aid
MSP	Medical Services Plan
Society	Graduate Student Society of The University of British Columbia – Vancouver
UBC	The University of British Columbia – Vancouver
VP Students	Vice-President, Students
VP UAA	Vice-President, University and Academic Affairs
VP External	Vice-President, External Relations

3 Graduate Student Financial Aid

- 3.1 The purpose of Graduate Student Financial Aid (GSFA) is to provide financial aid to UBC graduate students, except current UBC GSS Executives and current GSS graduate

student employees, who are experiencing unforeseen circumstances, to alleviate some financial burden.

- 3.2 GSFA shall cover eligible expenses directly arising from unforeseen circumstances, which may include but are not limited to: living expenses; prescription medications not covered by MSP, Pharmacare, and the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan; and the UBC Leave of Absence fee. GSFA will not cover tuition and other school fees.
- 3.3 To be eligible to apply for GSFA through the Graduate Student Emergency Fund, the Applicant must:
 - (a) be enrolled as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia-Vancouver,
 - (b) be in demonstrated financial hardship,
 - (c) be referred or recommended by a UBC office or academic unit, and
 - (d) have not previously applied for the GSFA during the past four (4) months, except for reconsideration of an earlier submitted application, or received it during the last twelve (12) months, unless the application is for a new and unrelated matter and satisfies the condition of unforeseen circumstance. .

4 Housing Security Aid

- 4.1 The purpose of the Housing Security Aid (HSA) is to provide housing related support to UBC graduate students who are facing housing insecurity or challenges.
- 4.2 The HSA fund shall cover security deposit for new leases, eligible expenses arising from costs of moving houses, replacement of damaged items in a graduate student's apartment which necessitates making another security deposit to the landlord, or costs of temporary accommodation for a graduate student who may otherwise become stranded, due to circumstances beyond their control.
- 4.3 The HSA covers rent increases by landlords and other housing related difficulties. Each HSA application would be considered fairly on its own merits and within its special circumstances.
- 4.4 The HSA fund shall not cover any of the matters and circumstances already covered by the GSFA as well as tuition and other school fees.

- 4.5 An applicant shall have the right to decide which of the two aids (GSFA or HSA) to apply for, depending on their needs. To this extent, no applicant shall apply for both the GSFA and HSA concurrently .
- 4.6 To be eligible to apply for HSA fund, the applicant must:
- (a) be enrolled as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia – Vancouver,
 - (b) not be a current GSS Executive or an employee of the GSS,
 - (c) be in real financial hardship relating to rent or other housing matters,
 - (d) be referred or recommended by the UBC Enrollment Services, and
 - (e) have not previously applied for HSA during the past four (4) months – except for reconsideration of an earlier submitted application, or received it during the last twelve (12) months preceding the application, unless the application is based on a new HSA matter.

5 The GSFA Adjudication Panel

- 5.1 The GSFA Adjudication Panel shall have the duty of administering both the GSFA and HSA funds.
- 5.2 The GSFA Adjudication Panel shall determine whether an applicant satisfies the eligibility requirements, and how much money will be allocated to an individual applicant.
- 5.3 The GSFA Adjudication Panel shall be comprised of the GSS Advocacy Coordinators, a representative from the GSS Academic and External Committee, a representative from the GSS House and Finance Committee, and the General Manager (GM). The GM shall preside over the meetings of the Panel. The representatives of the Academic and External Committee and House and Finance Committee shall report to their respective committees on the decision process and its results of the meetings of the GSFA Adjudication Panel. The GSS Administrative Assistant may provide clerical or note-taking support to the GSFA Adjudication Panel, but shall not be a member of the Panel or participate in the decision-making process of the Panel.
- 5.4 Decision of the GSFA Adjudication Panel shall be by a unanimous vote when deciding eligibility of an applicant, but by a simple majority when deciding on the amount of funding to be awarded to a successful applicant. All the members of the GSFA Adjudication Panel shall having a right to a vote, with the exception of the General Manager, who shall only have a deciding vote in the event of a tie.

- 5.5 The GSFA Adjudication Panel shall be convened by the GSS Advocacy Coordinators.
- 5.6 A quorum of four (4) members of the GSFA Adjudication Panel must be met in order to make any decision of the Panel. In the event that the GSFA Adjudication Panel is not able to meet quorum, any member of the GSS Executives can be invited to the Panel to satisfy this requirement and such an executive member would have a voting right in the decision of the Panel;
- 5.7 No more than two GSS executive members shall sit on a GSFA Adjudication Panel at any given point in time.
- 5.8 The GSFA Adjudication Panel shall exercise reasonable discretion in the administration of the GSFA and HSA when considering applications of graduate students; however, such discretion must be exercised judicially and judiciously, and on the basis of the strength and circumstances of each application.
- 5.9 Members of the GSFA Adjudication Panel, or any GSS Executives called upon for the purpose of quorum, must take the Harvard Bias Test and Privacy and Information Security tutorial before participating in the decision process. They must present documentation that they have taken the tests to the GSS General Manager.
- 5.10 Members of the GSFA Adjudication Panel shall disclose any potential conflicts of interest, as defined by pertinent UBC policies; recuse themselves from the decision process in cases where there are conflicts of interest; and arrange for a suitable replacement to serve on their behalf. Members who fail to disclose a conflict of interest shall be subjected to penalties, ranging from suspension from their position to termination of employment, to be determined by GSS Council following an investigation and recommendations by the GSS Academic and External Affairs Committee.
- 5.11 The GSFA Adjudication Panel will assess the applicant's need based on:
 - (a) a cover letter explaining the need for financial aid, which should include an explanation of up to seven hundred and fifty (750) words of the unexpected financial hardship that the applicant is experiencing and how they would use the aid to alleviate financial burden,
 - (b) a proof of enrolment letter that the applicant is a current graduate student of the University of British Columbia-Vancouver,
 - (c) a written referral or recommendation from a UBC office or academic unit. It must indicate that the kind of financial hardship the applicant is experiencing is not covered by the Emergency Fund administered by the UBC office or academic unit, and
 - (d) any relevant supporting documents.

- 5.12 For an HSA application, the supporting documents shall include:
- (a) a cover letter explaining in concise details the need for HSA and the justification for same;
 - (b) a proof of enrolment letter that the applicant is a current graduate student of the University of British Columbia - Vancouver,
 - (c) a written referral or recommendation from the UBC Enrollment Services. The application must indicate that the rent or housing related hardship that the applicant is experiencing is not covered by the Emergency Fund administered by the UBC Enrollment Services, and
 - (d) any other relevant supporting documents.
- 5.13 Funds are subject to availability, so not every application meeting the requirements in Policy 5.3 shall be approved or shall receive the full amount they requested.
- 5.14 The GSS Advocacy Coordinators will communicate the decision of the GSFA Adjudication Panel to the Applicant within four weeks of receiving complete application materials. The decision of the GSFA Adjudication Panel shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any other body of the Society.
- 5.15 An applicant whose application was rejected due to not meeting the eligibility criteria shall have a right to reconsideration of their application if they submit new or stronger supporting documents within thirty (30) days of receipt of the decision from the GSFA Adjudication Panel.
- 5.16 Any financial aid provided to an Applicant shall be entirely gratuitous and no contract between the Society and the Applicant shall be created as a result of any decision by the GSFA Adjudication Panel.
- 5.17 Every year, after the total allocation for the GSFA has been finalized in the annual GSS budget and approved by the GSS Council, the GSS Academic and External Affairs Committee shall decide the maximum level of financial support for any individual request.
- 5.18 The GSS Vice President University and Academic Affairs shall provide general oversight to the GSFA Adjudication Panel and can sit in the meeting of the Panel for deliberation of any applications, subject to fulfillment of the conditions stipulated in Policy 5.9.