GRADUATE STUDENT SOCIETY
UBC VANCOUVER

GSS Financial Aid Policy

Last revision: March 2025

1 General

1.1 The Objective of the GSS Financial Aid Policy is to provide policies and procedures for administering aid to alleviate the impact of unforeseen expenses. This Policy 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. In addition, any policy changes must be approved by the GSS Council during a Council meeting as per GSS Policies.

1.3 The GSS Financial Aid is designed to help alleviate unexpected financial stress for UBC graduate students. Given the nature of the adjudication process, it is not intended for immediate financial emergencies but rather for recovering costs incurred after such emergencies.

2 Abbreviations and Definitions

AMS	Alma Mater Society
FO	Financial Officer
GM	General Manager
GSFA	Graduate Student Financial Aid
GSS	Graduate Student Society
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 GSS Financial Aid Fund

3.1 Provides aid for UBC graduate students experiencing a financial burden due to unforeseen circumstances. Current GSS Executives and GSS graduate student employees are ineligible and may not apply to maintain fairness and eliminate potential bias or perceived conflicts of interest.

3.2 GSS Financial Aid shall cover eligible expenses directly arising from unforeseen circumstances, which may include but are not limited to:

3.2.1 Financial Challenges related to Housing (Living Expenses): financial support for housing-related expenses, including rent, utilities, and essential living costs, for individuals facing financial hardship.

3.2.2 Financial Challenges related to Medical and/or Dental: coverage for healthcare services and prescribed medications not included under the Medical Services Plan (MSP), Pharmacare, or the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan. This assistance is intended to help individuals access essential medical, mental and dental care and treatments that would otherwise be financially prohibitive.

3.2.3 Financial Challenges related to Emergency Issues, Crisis and/or Displacement: support for individuals affected by crises, including but not limited to armed conflicts, civil unrest, political instability, gang violence, war, natural disasters, and environmental emergencies. Assistance addresses both emotional and mental distress, as well as financial insecurity.

3.2.4. GSS Financial Aid will not cover tuition and other school fees.

3.3 To be eligible to apply for GSS Financial Aid through the Graduate Student Emergency Fund, the Applicant must:

(a) be enrolled as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia-Vancouver,

(b) demonstrate financial hardship,

(d) not have received GSS Financial Aid nor UBC Enrollment Services Financial Aid within the past 12 months, unless the panel determines that there is a justified unmet financial need or exceptional circumstances warrant an exception, and

(e) agree and sign the student declaration within the GSS Financial Aid Form.

4 The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel

4.1 The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall have the duty of administering the GSS Financial Aid Fund.

4.2 The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall determine whether an applicant satisfies the eligibility requirements, and how much funding will be allocated to an individual applicant.

4.3 The GSS Financial Aid 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 GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel. The GSS Administrative Assistant may provide clerical or note-taking support to the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel but shall not be a member of the Panel or participate in the decision-making process of the Panel.

4.4 Decision of the GSS Financial Aid 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 GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall having a right to a vote, except for the General Manager, who shall only have a deciding vote in the event of a tie.

4.5 The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall be convened by the GSS Advocacy Coordinators.

4.5.1 If the GSS Advocacy Coordinator position is vacant, the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall be convened by GSS Vice President University and Academic Affairs.

4.6 A quorum of four (4) members of the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel must be met in order to make any decision of the Panel. If the GSS Financial Aid 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.

4.7 No more than two (2) GSS executive members shall sit on a GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel at any given point in time.

4.8 The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall exercise reasonable discretion in the administration of the GSS Financial Aid when considering applications of graduate students; however, such discretion must be exercised judicially and judiciously and based on the strength and circumstances of each application. Additionally, the Panel

shall handle this discretion with care and maintain confidentiality throughout the adjudication process.

4.9 Members of the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel, or any GSS Executives called upon for the purpose of quorum, must complete the UBC Micro-certificate "Anti Racism". They also must complete the UBC Privacy Information Security course before participating in the decision process. They must present documentation that they have taken the trainings to the GSS General Manager.

4.10 Members of the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall disclose any potential conflicts of interest; 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.

4.11 The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel will assess the applicant's need based on:

(a) a proof of enrolment letter that the applicant is a current graduate student at the University of British Columbia-Vancouver,

(b) a complete GSS Financial Aid form,

(c) proof of financial need, like any relevant supporting documents/receipts, and

(d) confirmation that the applicant has not received GSS Financial Aid nor UBC Enrollment Services Financial Aid within the past 12 months. The GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel will contact the UBC Enrollment Services directly to confirm this information.

4.12 Funds are subject to availability. In the case of high application volume, priority will be given based on need. Meeting the requirements in Policy 3.3 does not guarantee approval or full funding.

4.13 The GSS Advocacy Coordinators will notify the applicant of the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel's decision via the provided email within four (4) weeks of receiving a complete application. The decision of the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any other body of the Society.

4.14 An applicant whose application was rejected due to not meeting the eligibility criteria shall have the right to reconsideration of their application if they submit new, stronger, or previously missing or forgotten supporting documents within thirty (30) days of receipt of the decision from the GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel.

4.15 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 GSS Financial Aid Adjudication Panel.

4.16 Every year, after the total allocation for the GSS Financial Aid 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.

4.17 The GSS Vice President University and Academic Affairs shall provide general oversight to the GSS Financial Aid 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 4.9.