

ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED:

Decision
Recommendation
Discussion/Direction
Information

DATE: May 26, 2020

FROM: Graduate Studies Committee

SUBJECT: 2020 Graduate Student Conference Travel Award Guidelines

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE MANDATE:

- Under the Terms of Reference Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) is responsible to review and approve terms of reference for all graduate scholarships, bursaries and other academic awards and prizes and to report its decisions on these matters to Academic Council
- Graduate Studies Committee has approved changes to the Graduate Student Conference Travel Award Guidelines and is reporting these changes to Academic Council for information

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT/RATIONALE:

Recently the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) has had the opportunity to review the internal procedures related to the payment of these awards, and have identified some challenges, leading to some proposed changes. Getting financial support to students is a priority, as such, SGPS will be moving away from the Travel Award being a reimbursement of related expenses and will be considering it award income. There will be no changes to the criteria, selection process or timelines. The changes will impact administration and payment. The enclosed memo provides further details on the changes for students, Faculties, and researchers.

APPROVAL PATHWAY:

- GSC April 2020 - Approval
- Academic Council May 2020 – for Information

NEXT STEPS:

- These Guidelines will now be implemented

SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:

- **Memorandum to Graduate Studies Committee from Langis Roy**
- **2020 Graduate Student Conference Travel Award Guidelines**

April 28, 2020

To: Graduate Studies Committee, Graduate Program Directors
From: Langis Roy, Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Re: Graduate Student Conference Travel Awards
Cc: Lori Livingston, Provost and Vice-President Academic

After a number of years coordinating the Graduate Student Research Conference Travel Awards (Travel Awards), the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) has had the opportunity to review the internal procedures related to the payment of the awards. We have identified some challenges, leading to some proposed changes.

- Timing of getting funds to students, which is often well after the conference has taken place.
- Volume of work associated with the collection and checking of receipts, as well as coordinating with Faculties and individual research supervisors.

Given that getting financial support to students is our priority, and that it was identified by the Graduate Studies Committee as a priority, effective April 1, 2020, SGPS will be moving away from the Travel Award being a reimbursement of related expenses and will be considering it award income.

There will be no changes to the criteria, selection process or timelines. The changes will impact administration and payment.

Changes for the students

- The award will be transferred to student accounts shortly after SGPS has made all award decisions for a particular cycle, which is often when expenses are incurred.
- Students will no longer be required to submit receipts, but may have their file audited and may be required to show proof of attendance and other receipts.
- This will be considered scholarship award income to recognize the student's success in presenting and representing the university at academic or professional conferences, therefore it is not considered reimbursement of expenses incurred.

Changes for Faculties and Researchers

- SGPS will no longer be coordinating payment with researchers and Faculties.

Enclosed are the revised Graduate Student Conference Travel Award Guidelines.

Graduate Student Conference Travel Award Guidelines

Overview

The Graduate Student Research Travel Award provides financial support to graduate students in thesis-based programs who are attending and presenting research at academic or professional conferences.

Research presentations supported by this fund will include presentations at professional conferences of findings from projects conducted by Ontario Tech University graduate students. Graduate students must be recommended by their supervisor and graduate program director to receive such awards. Projects must have been conducted under the mentorship of an Ontario Tech faculty member.

Value of awards

The committee will award up to \$500 per student, with most awards in the \$300 range, even though the cost of attending the conference may exceed that amount.

There are limited funds available to award each cycle. Awards are contingent upon the availability of funds and the number of applications.

As this award serves as supplemental funding for the proposed conference, applicants are expected to seek out additional funding from other sources and clearly indicate these sources on their application form.

Application deadline

Applications will be accepted any time prior to the application deadlines noted below.

Spring deadline: Thursday, April 30, 2020, for conferences between April 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020.

Fall deadline: Saturday, October 31, 2020 for conferences between October 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

How to apply

Students may submit their application before or after the conference has taken place, but must submit within the appropriate application window as indicated above.

The application form can be found [here](#) and must be signed by the student's supervisor and graduate program director. In addition to a completed application, the student must also submit a copy of the conference presentation abstract and confirmation of conference acceptance.

Eligibility

In order to apply for travel support, a graduate student must:

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- Be actively presenting their research (relevant to their current degree program) at an academic conference that occurs within the appropriate cycle's timeframe;
- Be enrolled as a thesis-based master's or doctoral student at Ontario Tech University at the time of the conference.

Due to the limited number of awards available, eligibility does not guarantee receipt of financial support.

Selection criteria

Applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Applicant is in **good academic standing** and has strong supervisor/GPD support
- Proposed academic conference is **appropriate at the current stage** of the applicant's program
- Conference is sponsored by a scholarly association/society, university or institution
- The student must be the presenting author for at least one presentation or poster
- Preference will be given to full-time graduate students and to those who have not previously received a Graduate Student Research Travel Award.

Next Steps

Award recipients will be notified within one month of the application deadline.

Payment of the award will be made to the student's tuition account, normally within one week from the notification of award.

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies reserves the right to perform random audits of award recipients and you may be asked to provide proof of attendance.

Proof documentation may include:

- Proof of conference attendance and active participation (for example, conference brochure, agenda or screenshot of URL listing applicant as presenter)
- Receipt issued by conference organizer of registration showing amount paid