

# Post Secondary Student Assistant Program (PSSAP)

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# Post Secondary Student Assistant Program (PSSAP)

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## **Dene Tha' First Nation Post Secondary Student Assistance Policy Effective September 2017, Reviewed: April 2021**

The post secondary student assistance program was established to help eligible Dene Tha' First Nation (DTFN) students to gain access to and successfully complete college and university programs. These formal guidelines have been followed since 1994 and many students have benefitted and successfully completed Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor and Master Degree programs. The Dene Tha' people believe cultural identity and education is equally important and that we can have the best of both worlds. Education is key to our future survival as a culturally distinct First Nation.

### **Introduction**

This document outlines the various types of support that are available through the Dene Tha' First Nation Education Post Secondary Student Assistance Program (DTFNE PSSAP) to eligible Treaty/registered First Nation of the DTFN.

The PSSAP is in effect for all PS students, including students who were previously funded by the DTFN PSSAP and new applicants beginning with the 2017/2018 Academic Year.

The DTFN Chief and Council, by way of an approved Band Council Resolution (BCR), have the right to amend, delete and modify aspects of this policy to meet educational needs and based on available PS education budget.

The administration of the PSSAP has been assigned to the Post Secondary Education Manager (PSEM) who acts under the direction of the DTFN Education and Chief and Council.

The objectives of the PSSAP are to support Treaty/registered First Nation of the DTFN to gain access to Post Secondary (PS) education to graduate with qualifications and skills needed to pursue individual careers, and to contribute to the achievement of self-determination and economic self-reliance.

Students are requested to familiarize themselves with this policy when time permits. It is to be used as a reference for students and generally will answer a question concerning sponsorship needs.

The sponsorship process is simplified by the following description: The student applies to one or more PS Institutes; upon acceptance at an institute, the student completes the PSSAP Application Package and submits them along with supporting documents (listed on the application package) to the PSEM. PSEM will then appraise the application in terms of funding priority and funding availability and advise the student as promptly as possible of the status of his/her application for sponsorship has received approval. The PSEM is available to help throughout the process or answer any questions students may have.

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## Eligibility for Support

To be eligible to apply for assistance under the Dene Tha' First Nation PSSAP, an applicant must;

1. Be Treaty/registered First Nation individual whose name appears on the list as a member of the Dene Tha' First Nation and who has been resident in Canada for 12 consecutive months prior to the date of application for funding support;
2. Can provide documentation indicating that they have been accepted by an eligible PS institution into either a certificate or diploma program, a degree, or a UCEP (University and College Entrance Preparation) program; **and**
3. Must provide an outline of program costs, tuition, books and supplies costs, and completed & signed copies of the PSAP Application Package to the PSEM; **and**
4. Must provide proof that they have applied for other sources of funding support or have applied for scholarships or bursaries; **and**
5. Maintain satisfactory academic standing within that institution (as per the institution's definition of satisfactory academic standing); **and**
6. UCEP students must also obtain from the PS institution offering the program a statement that attests the UCEP program will provide the student with the necessary courses to attain the academic level for university or college entrance and the student will be eligible to be accepted as a student of a regular university or college credit program upon successful completion of the UCEP course of studies.

Eligible applicants will be assigned a priority number prior to final acceptance.

Support will be provided within the limit of funds available in the DTFNE PS education budget. If support required for eligible students exceeds the budget available, applicants will be given priority according to the priority list. Funding is limited and not all students may be funded or partial funding may be provided.

The PSEM and Education Committee has the discretion to deny funding to any student. However, reasons must be given and the student is entitled to appeal the decision using the appeal procedure outlined in the PSSAP.

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## Note:

- **Bill C-31 and C-3 Registrants:**
  - Bill C-31 and C-3 Registrants: People who gain FN status by virtue of the 1985 revision of the *Indian Act* (Bill C-31) or the *Gender Equity in Indian Registrant Act* (Bill C-3).
  - A person whose application for Indian Status is in process is not eligible to apply for support until he/she has a letter from the Indian Registry confirming Indian Status or that his/her name is formally entered in ISC (Indigenous Services Canada)'s Indian Register.

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- **Exemptions to the 12 Month Residency Requirement**

- Students who are normally resident in Canada but who for the purpose of attaining post secondary education (whether through PSSAP or at their own expense) have been living outside of Canada for all or part of the year prior to the application for support. For students attending these post secondary institutions outside Canada, the residency provision applies only to their first year of studies or their final year of studies.
- Students who, under the authority of provincial or territorial child welfare legislation, were placed outside of Canada in a foster home, and institution (e.g. a group home), or through an adoption and have returned to Canada.

Where there is doubt that the student meets the residency requirement, the student will be required to provide a notarized statement which establishes his/her residency in Canada for the 12-month period preceding the date of application.

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### **Eligible Programs**

Under the PSSAP and the UCEP, an eligible program of studies is a program:

- For which the completion of secondary school studies, or the equivalent as recognized by the PS institution or the provincial ministry of education, is required; **and**
- Offered by a PS institution that is at least one academic year in duration; **and**
- Delivered at an eligible institution as defined in section **Eligible Institutions**.
- UCEP programs must provide the student with the necessary courses to attain the academic level for university or college entrance.

Refer to the post secondary institution for information on student admissibility to program of study. Delivery method may be in-classroom, e-learning, distance learning, or virtual learning as long as it meets all eligibility criteria.

### **Eligible PS Institutions**

Eligible PS institutions are certificate, diploma, or degree granting institutions that are:

- Recognized by a province (in Canada or abroad); **or**
- Educational institutions recognized to deliver PS programs by arrangement with an eligible PS institution.

For a list of PS institutions in your province, please consult the appropriate provincial Ministry of Education website for their list of certified PS institutions.

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## Funding Priority

Qualified applicants to the PSSAP will be assigned a funding priority number according to the following criteria (every effort will be made to provide funding to Bushe River, Chateh, and Meander River based on student needs);

- Priority #1 Continuing Students: students continuing their studies from the current academic year with a break (not including summer break between academic years). This includes a student who completes one-year of UCEP.
- Priority #2 Grade 12 Students: students who have successfully completed their high school education and have been accepted in a PS institution. This includes a student who completes their Academic Upgrading of high school diploma equivalency.
- Priority #3 Deferred Students: those whose applications were deferred due to limited funding and who are reapplying for support.
- Priority #4 Mature Students: those accepted in certificate, diploma or degree programs under the category of “mature students”.
- Priority #5 University College Entrance Preparation (UCEP) Students: new students who need to complete prerequisites to pursue subsequent PS education and who will attend preparation programs to a maximum of one academic year.
- Priority #6 Recent PSE funded graduates who wish to further their studies.
- Priority #7 Previous Withdrawals: students who have sporadically attended PS institutions over a number of years or who have not yet used the maximum sponsorship duration available from the DTFN Education PSSAP.
- Priority #8 Students who have reached the total length/duration of sponsorship available under the PSSAP, but who can after being sponsored for one additional term, successfully graduate from their program of study.
- Priority #9 New students already studying at a PS level (students who have already completed part of their program but were not previously funded by the DTFNE PSSAP.

If funding support for qualified applicants exceeds the funds available in the DTFNE PS education budget applicants will be given priority according to the above list.

All students should be aware that if funding is limited, the final priority category accommodated in any fiscal year will be on the basis of individual student academic achievement.

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## Application Process

All students must complete DTFNE PS Application Package for educational assistance as outlined in this policy, completing, signing and returning applicable forms to the PSEM as soon as possible. All students must apply to be accepted by a PS institution before their application for sponsorship can be considered processed and finalized by the DTFNE. Incomplete and unsigned application forms will not be processed.

Assistance will be provided to a continuing student who submit a completed application that includes a letter of acceptance and/or registration document and an official transcript at the end of each academic year.

The student will be advised regarding the status of their application as soon as possible by the DTFNE PSEM.

All student information submitted to and received by the DTFNE and/or the PSEM will remain confidential.

New students seeking sponsorship must be interviewed by the PSEM prior to applying for entrance to a PS institute. The PSEM will list recommended institutes for the program of study desired, give the student a DTFNE Application Package and verbally outline the procedure to follow and describe sponsorship details, limits and guidelines.

Acceptance to a PS institute must be verified by a letter of acceptance from that institute. Applicants must complete the standard DTFNE application package. Applicants must file their applications by June 15<sup>th</sup> for September in-take, and by November 15<sup>th</sup> for January in-take.

The PSEM will calculate the amount of financial assistance to be provided to each student; will inform applicants as soon as possible regarding the status of their applications and the amount and date of sponsorship once an application is approved.

If the number of applications does not exceed available budget, additional applications received after the cut off dates will be considered in the order in which they were received.

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## **Application and Tuition Fees Support**

Application fees and tuition costs are provided in full for all part-time and full-time approved students for funding support.

The DTFNE will reimburse a student for cost of making an application for enrollment at a PS institute. Although the cost of an application fee is covered by the DTFNE, it does not necessarily mean the educational program is automatically covered as well.

The DTFNE will reimburse a maximum of three applications per student per academic year. The PSEM has the discretion to approve additional PS applications. Otherwise, the student must cover the cost out of pocket, for additional PS institute applications.

If the application to the PS institute is successful and the student completed the necessary paperwork, the student will be wait-listed for subsequent sponsorship as outlined in the funding priorities section.

The student must forward any letter of acceptance received from the PS institute he/she has applied to as soon as it is received. Failure to do so may result in the loss of acceptance at the PS institute if the required tuition/registration deposit is not paid on time. The deposit is required by some PS institutes in order to hold the students place in the program. The student must retain and submit the tuition deposit receipt to the PSEM in order to be reimbursed for the expenditure.

The student may seek assistance from the PSEM when making his/her application. If the student attempts to make an application without the assistance to the PSEM, it is strongly recommended that the student contact the PS institute by phone and pre-screen his/her application with the institute program coordinator. This is to avoid spending money on an application that will be rejected due to insufficient PS institute prerequisites.

The student must request an official receipt from the PS institute and present the receipt to the PSEM in order to be reimbursed for the expenditure. The amount will be paid in Canadian Funds. The receipt must also be detailed so that it is clear that it is an application fee or tuition/registration deposit and clearly identify the PS institute and date.

Tuition support, including mandatory student fees will be provided for;

1. Students who enroll in Canadian PS institutions and who are charged the actual tuition and compulsory fees for a Canadian student.

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2. Students who attend private or foreign PS institution will be provided the same tuition support as charged by the Canadian PS institute that is nearest to the student's place of residence at the time of application and offers a comparable program. The program must be accredited by the applicable governing body in Canada or no support will be provided.
3. Students who enroll in a foreign PS institution will receive support for the actual tuition, when no comparable program is available in Canada. The program must be accredited by the applicable governing body in Canada or no support will be provided.

Part-time students, upon approval for sponsorship may receive assistance for tuition and compulsory fees, and the actual costs of books and supplies which are listed as required by the P/S institution but they are not eligible for living allowances or travel costs.

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### Note:

- For support purposes, students may enrol in any private PS institution recognized by the provincial Ministry of Education or in an acceptable program of studies in a foreign PS institution (see Eligible PS Institutions section)
- A program of studies at a private or foreign PS institution is comparable to a program of studies at a Canadian public PS institution when the following conditions are met:
  - The minimum academic prerequisites are equivalent;
  - The number of credit hours are equivalent to within 10%, i.e. a 20-credit hour program is equivalent to another program which has between 18 to 22 credit hours; and
  - The course content generally covers the same subject matter.
- The student will provide documentation which identifies the most comparable program in the nearest Canadian public PS institution to his/her place of residence. The documentation must include registration, tuition and mandatory student fees of the Canadian public PS institution.
- In some cases a PS institution in the United States of America may be nearer to a student's home than a Canadian PS institution. If the United States' program of studies is eligible per the Nation Program Guidelines, it may be cost effective and less disruptive for a student to enrol in the United States' PS institution.

Example: If a tuition in United States PS institution cost \$1000 and the Canadian public PS institution cost is \$700, the tuition support provided to the student will be \$700.

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Following the approval of the application for sponsorship and verification of the student's enrolment, tuition fees will be paid directly to the PS institution in Canadian Funds. The student will be required to pay the balance of his/her tuition and compulsory fees over and above that provided to the student by the DTFNE.



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## **Books and Supplies Support**

Support for books and supplies will normally cover textbooks and supplies, including special equipment officially listed by the PS institute as required for the student's program of study.

1. Books and supplies will be funded only to levels indicated by official program documentation as provided by the PS institute. This funding is only available if the student attends for the respective semester.
2. Tuition, books and supplies will be paid by on a semester by semester basis only. Second term expenses will not be advance/covered until proof of successful first semester completion is received by the DTFNE.
3. No direct funds will be advanced to a student for the purpose of purchasing books and supplies. Only necessary books and supplies as detailed by the program will be covered by the DTFNE. The DTFNE will establish a books and supply limit at the P/S institute bookstore for the student to acquire.
4. Direct funds will be advanced to a student in circumstances where the DTFNE is unable to expend direct billing methods with the PS institute bookstore. Under no circumstances will the DTFNE provide duplicate payments to a student. Should a student fail to use the money advanced for the purpose of which it was intended, the student will be required to resolve the matter without further assistance or support from the DTFNE. Should direct funds be provided to a student for necessary books/equipment, the student is expected to forward the receipt to the PSEM for verification.

After the student has received confirmation of sponsorship from the DTFNE the PSEM will forward a letter of sponsorship to the PS institution. The letter of sponsorship will establish an account and credit limit at the institution bookstore for the student to acquire his/her books and supplies. The student should visit the bookstore at his/her earliest convenience and verify that the account has been set-up and acquire his/her books before existing stock is depleted.

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## **Interview and Examination Support**

The DTFNE will pay fees for examinations and interviews that are required for entrance into professional and accredited programs. These include Skills Appraisal Testing, Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), Dentistry Admission Test Standard (DATS), and Nursing.

The DTFNE will provide assistance for the cost of one examination or interview only. The institute must confirm that the examination or interview is a requirement for entry into the student's program.

The student must cover the cost of any additional examinations at his/her own expense.

The DTFNE reserves the right to arrange the exam at the least expense to the DTFNE. For example, a Skills Appraisal exam can be brought to the student, rather than the student traveling to take the exam.

The student must give the PSEM forewarning and sufficient time to consider examination logistics and alternatives.

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## **Tutoring Support**

The DTFNE may fund costs associated with tutoring to aid students having difficulty in specific course study. The student must advise the PSEM in advance of the need to access tutoring assistance.

The student must arrange tutoring assistance with the approval and/or assistance of the course instructor which he/she is experiencing difficulty in.

The student must have 95% attendance or better in the course for which he/she is applying for tutoring assistance.

The total amount of tutoring time and cost required cannot exceed the instructional time and cost of the course and under no circumstances will tutoring exceed \$400.00 per term to any one student.

Tutoring assistance will not be provided more than once for any course.

The student should complete the Tutoring Forms that ensure the following;

1. Confirmation from the student's professor or program faculty stating that tutoring is necessary and the proposed amount is acceptable.
2. Gives the student the proper procedure for finding a tutor or suitable tutors. This can usually be done with the assistance of the instructor of the course in which the student is experiencing difficulty.
3. Makes direct application to the DTFNE for the proper amount of tutoring required as confirmed by the course instructor.

Application for tutorial assistance must be made to PSEM as soon as possible as it may require time for review if the education budget will allow for such support.

It is understood that the DTFNE will budget a set amount for all student tutoring needs at the beginning of the academic year. Tutoring expenditures by the DTFNE will be limited by that budget; or by additional resources available at the time of the request.

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### **Travel and Moving Support**

Students who are required to live away from their permanent place of residence may qualify for travel assistance during Christmas break for themselves and any eligible dependents who reside with them. The Christmas travel assistance unused by the student is not transferable to another time.

Travel support will be equal to the cost of return transportation from the student's permanent place of residence to the nearest Canadian PS institute that offers the program of studies which the student is enrolled in. Travel will be funded through the most economical means.

Student will also be provided travel expense and a \$200.00 moving allowance at the beginning of the academic year and at the end of the academic year.

Students are encouraged to retain their school residence during session breaks between academic years by seeking local employment in early April or, after failing to secure local employment, by applying for social assistance at the beginning of April. This will avoid having to move his/her possessions and belongings to and forth between home and school.

Travel practicum, when necessary should be arranged in advance by the student with the PSEM and should use the most economical means.

Students taking classes through distance education or e-learning who are required to travel to another location to complete their required exams may be eligible for travel support. However, advance notice must be given to the PSEM and should use the most economical means.

Dene Tha' First Nation standard travel mileage rates as offered to First Nation employees do not apply to student travel rates.

Travel support by the DTFNE will be limited by the budget and may be denied at the discretion of the PSEM.

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## **Living Allowance Support**

Support for living expenses is provided and intended to cover such costs as food, shelter, clothing, daily transportation, day-care, rental items and contingency funding.

Monthly allowances to assist students to fund their living expenses will be provided at the rates outlined in PSSAP [Living Allowance Rates](#).

When students attend foreign institutes, living allowances will not exceed the rates specified and will be paid in Canadian Funds.

In view of their reduced housing costs, students who are living at home situated on Dene Tha' First Nation territory will have their living allowance reduced by 25%. This reduction does not apply to students occupying on-reserve rental units.

Students who are on any type of leave with pay from their place of employment will not qualify for assistance with living expenses, unless their employment wage is less than the living allowance they would receive as outlined in [Living Allowance Rates](#). In this case, the employer portion may be supplemented to equal the applicable rate level specified.

The method of payment for living allowances will be by direct bank deposit. Should there be a reason to mail a cheque, students are responsible for providing the PSEM with an accurate up-to-date mailing address before the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the month prior to their move. Students who move without advising the PSEM must ensure that their mail is redirected. The PSEM will not issue a second payment until the missing payment is rectified, either by a returned cheque or by confirmation of a stop payment order issued by the bank.

The DTFNE must be given a written instruction by the student before living allowance cheques will be directed or given to someone else other than the student.

Under no circumstances will the DTFNE provide duplicate payments to a student. Should the student fail to use the living allowance for the purpose of covering expenses such as monthly rental payments, the student will be required to resolve the matter on his/her own without further assistance or support from the DTFNE.

Income level verification of an employed/dependent spouse may be required at time of application.

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In cases where dependents are being claimed, please refer to the Family Information Sheet in the Application Package. Youth 18 years of age or older as of sponsorship approval will not be considered a dependent, unless proof of school enrollment and attendance reports are provided.

Where two students are married/common-law to each other, and have no dependents, the living allowance for each will be calculated as a married/common-law student with an employed spouse.

Where two students are married/common-law to each other and have dependents, one of them will be designated as a married/common-law student with an employed spouse with dependents; the other will be designated as a married/common-law student with an employed spouse.

For any student who successfully attains a bursary and/or scholarship financial award, their level of support provided by the DTFNE will not be impacted. The DTFNE encourages all students to apply for and earn these types of awards. If the student needs help in locating suitable awards he/she should approach the PSEM. While the PSSAP makes no specific provision against students receiving Social Assistance while also receiving an educational sponsorship from the DTFNE, students are cautioned to disclose all sources of income (including the amount of your educational sponsorship monthly living allowance) to Social Development so your monthly Income Support payment may be adjusted accordingly. Failure to disclose all source of income to Social Development may result in legal action by Social Development to recover any and/or all over payments made.

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### **Damage/Security Deposit Support**

Students who must move to attend school are eligible for damage/security deposit support.

The DTFNE will provide a fixed damage/security deposit payment to eligible students to assist them in securing a residence near to their PS institute of study. If a student secures a residence without the help of damage deposit funds, the funds will not be reimbursed.

Eligible students will receive, at most, one-time only damage/security deposit payment for first academic year of study in the maximum amount of \$500.00.

If the damage/security deposit required exceeds the amount provided, the student must make up the difference.

The damage/security deposit becomes the property of the student. When a student moves and vacates his/her residence, any portion of the damage/security deposit recovered may be kept by the student. It is in the best interest of each student to vacate their old premises leaving it clean and with sufficient advance notice to their landlords. This will ensure that most of the damage/security deposit is returned to the student by the landlord.

The payment is provided automatically to all full-time students who are relocating for the academic year.

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### Special Equipment Support

Funding will not be provided for regular clothing which students are expected to purchase from their living allowances. However, some courses and PS institutions require special uniforms or safety equipment for the program of study. These items may be funded if the PS institute provides written verification or program outlines that state that they are required by the program.

Some courses require the student to have special equipment. The PSSAP does not specifically purchase any special equipment for student use. However, the DTFNE can provide funds for students to rent or lease equipment during the duration of the course/program requiring the equipment. The equipment must be required by the program and the student must arrange for the PS institute to provide written support of the requirement to the DTFNE. This letter must state that the equipment is specifically required for a course or that without the equipment the student may fail the course. The Special Equipment Form should be used.

If the student wants to purchase program related equipment using his/her own resources, the DTFNE will provide a letter of support similar to the sample found in Special Equipment Form. The student may find the letter useful at a loan or lease agency in helping him/her to access loan financing for the equipment purchase.

There are no allowances provided for rental of laptops or any computer techs for general use. Many PS institutes and aboriginal student services offer access to computer and work processing systems to the student at no charge. The need for special equipment will be considered only if the DTFNE has sufficient PS funding on hand to support it.

The PS institution that the student is attending must provide written verification of the need of the special clothing, safety equipment, tools or any other special equipment to the PSEM prior to the approval of the allowance. The Special Equipment Form should be used.



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## **Distance Learning Support**

If a full-time student wants to take additional courses related to his/her program of study he/she may do so under the following circumstances:

1. The DTFNE will fund the course as long as the PS institute confirms that the regular course load is such that the additional course may be taken without jeopardizing the existing program. The time of the course must not conflict with any of the student's regular program courses.
2. The course must be relevant to and be accredited towards the student's program of study.

If a full-time student wants to take additional courses outside of his/her program of study he/she may do so under the following circumstances:

1. The DTFNE will fund the course as long as the PS institute confirms that the regular course load is such that the additional course may be taken without jeopardizing the existing program. The time of the course must not conflict with any of the student's regular program courses.
2. The course must be relevant to and be accredited towards the student's program of study.
3. The course costs must be covered by the student and upon successful completion all costs will be reimbursed by the DTFNE.

Note: no additional funds are available for this purpose, but funding may be available within exiting budget.

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## **Convocation Support**

Students who will be graduating are eligible for graduation support.

The DTFNE will provide a fixed graduation payment of a maximum of \$400.00 to eligible students to assist them in the following:

1. Suit/gown rental
2. Tickets for official faculty sanctioned graduation functions
3. Travel support for a limit of four invitees to attend

If the graduation expense exceeds the amount provided, the student must make up the difference as PS budget is limited.

The student must contact the PSEM in advance, request the graduation expense and provide proof of convocation invitation from their PS institute for their program of study and details of their invitees to attend their commencement ceremonies.

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## Duration of Support

Assistance will be provided for three levels of post secondary:

- Level – 1      Community college, diploma and certificate programs for two (2) academic years
- Level – 2      Undergraduate programs for five (5) academic years, ie. Bachelor’s Degree
- Level – 3      1) Professional degree programs for three (3) academic years, ie. Law, Medicine  
                         2) Masters degree programs for two (2) academic years  
                         3) Doctoral degree programs for one (1) academic year

The PSEM has the discretion to extend the sponsorship duration for Level 2 & 3 programs whenever a graduation outcome is certain and funding is still available after the needs of all other eligible students have been considered and addressed.

Students requiring an extra term to successfully graduate from their program will be assigned a funding priority #8.

Level 2 and level 3 programs must be back to back, without interruption longer than a normal session break or as stipulated by the PS institution, or the student will not be eligible for Level 3 sponsorship.

Note: Academic year is defined by the PS institution, but will not be less than eight months in duration.

1. Tuition, compulsory student fees and required books and supplies will be provided to students enrolled in all three levels.
2. Assistance will be provided to approved students to complete program Level 1. Level 2 will include support for an additional Bachelor Degree program that has an undergraduate degree as a prerequisite. Level 3 will include support for either a) a Professional Degree Program or b) a Masters Degree Program or c) a Doctorate Degree Program.
3. The duration for support as stated in 2 above will equal the official length of the program as defined by the PS institution in which the student is enrolled, as long as the student is in satisfactory academic standing at the PS institution as per the PS institution’s definition of satisfactory “academic standing”.
4. Students enrolled in Level 1 and Level 2 will be sponsored for up to one (1) additional academic year per Level if such an extension is approved in writing by the PS institution’s Dean, or Department Head and/or the Post Secondary Education Manager (PSEM).

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5. Students may be sponsored for up to one (1) additional academic year in Level 3 for medical or personal reasons at the discretion of the PSEM.
6. Students may be sponsored in Level 1 studies after dropping out or withdrawing from Level 2 studies. If a student resumes Level 2 studies, the previous time spent at Level 2 studies will be counted when determining the duration of support available.
7. Students who have completed a Level 2 and 3 programs, with or without sponsorship under the PSSAP program are not eligible for Level 1 program support.
8. Student support will not exceed the limits set out in the paragraphs above. Where students change programs within one of the levels or temporarily pause their studies, the academic years or semesters used for each program within each level will be counted for assistance purposes. Students who become eligible for assistance and who have previously completed a portion of PS studies without assistance from DTFNE may receive assistance for the balance of their program of studies but will not be reimbursed for previous expenses.

If the demand from eligible students exceeds the funding available, priority selection criteria will apply.

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## Incentives and Awards

In recognition of their achievement, the Dene Tha' First Nation may provide a cash award to full time students in all levels who have grade point average of B or higher in their program of studies.

The PSEM may consider a student for an achievement award after receiving satisfactory confirmation of achievement (official transcript).

In recognition of the time, devotion, and hard work that is required to complete a PS educational program, students who have successfully completed their program of study will be provided with an award as follows:

Level – 1	One-year certificate program	\$ 150
	One-year diploma program (Following certificate program)	\$ 200
	Two-year diploma program	\$ 250
Level – 2	Bachelor Degree	\$ 500
Level – 3	Masters Degree	\$1000
	Doctorate Degree	\$2000

In addition to the financial awards detailed above, each student will also receive a cultural gift award to emphasize the cultural and traditional significance of his/her accomplishment.

The amount of the above awards may be reduced in order to recover any unresolved overpayment made to the student during the period of sponsorship. For example, if the student fails to return any advances and/or the student fails to submit any requested expense receipts, etc.

Note: No additional funds are available for this purpose, but funding may be available within existing budget.

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## **Termination of Support**

The PSEM will suspend payments to any student being sponsored under the PSSAP under the following conditions;

1. Notice is received of the student withdrawing or dropping out of a program of study
2. Notice is received of the student withdrawing or dropping out of any course within his/her program of study without first contacting, discussing this and receiving approval from the PSEM
3. The student course load classification changes from full time to part time
4. The student fails to obtain the minimum credits required by his/her chosen program of study during the academic year
5. Program attendance is not to the satisfaction of the PS institute academic advisor (if it is deemed that the student has missed too much class time to recover)
6. The student has provided false information on his/her application for sponsorship that resulted in the receipt of higher living allowance rate classification than eligible for or resulted in damage/security deposit payment the student did not require. The student must realize that PSSAP funding is limited and to receive more than he/she is justly due may cause another student to be wrongly denied sponsorship due to presumed lack of funding.

# Post Secondary Student Assistant Program (PSSAP)

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## **Consequences of PSSAP Abuse**

If a student is terminated from the PS institute he/she is attending or withdraws for any reason, that student will not be eligible for PSSAP sponsorship for one (1) academic year following the termination.

Students who abuse the PSSAP sponsorship guidelines will be required to repay any overpayments in full to the DTFNE.

If a student determines that his/her program choice is in error and is able to conduct an orderly withdrawal from the program which results in a tuition and books expenditures reimbursement to the DTFNE, DTFNE may consider sponsoring the student earlier than one (1) full academic year following the withdrawal. However, lost moneys in terms of living allowances and supplies may be reclaimed through monthly deductions from the future sponsorship payments.

A student who has abused the PSSAP sponsorship guidelines in the past, who reapplies and is approved for PSSAP sponsorship will have monthly deductions taken from his/her living allowance payments until any overpayment is repaid.

If a student who has abused the PSSAP sponsorship guidelines in the past becomes a band employee at a later date and the overpayment has not been repaid, the overpayment may be deducted from earned wages.

If a student fails his/her program of study, withdraws without notice or is suspended by the PS institute, or this has happened on three occasions, the PSSAP will no longer fund the student to enter the PSSAP on a conditional basis and will be immediately removed from the PSSAP if a similar event recurs.

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## Appeal Procedure

To ensure fairness and equitable treatment an appeal process is contained within the PSAP to enable students to appeal decisions made by the PSEM while considering the students problem with the existing framework of the PSSAP.

If the student is unhappy with the decision of the PSEM, he/she may appeal the decision to the DTFN Education Director with the Appeal Form.

If still unhappy after making his/her appeal to the DTFN Education Director, the student may make one final appeal to the DTFN Executive of Operations, again using the Appeal Form.

All decisions of the DTFN Executive of Operations shall be considered final for the particular appeal in question, but need not be followed by the PSEM for future claims of similar nature until the appeal decision is confirmed by subsequent band council resolution (BCR). The BCR will modify the PSSAP and the PSEM's subsequent interpretation of the PSSAP.

Any appeal is automatically denied in instances where the DTFNE PS education budget is fully committed and where a decision favorable to the student would place the DTFNE PS budget in a deficit condition. There is no appeal against refusal of assistance because funds are not available.

A student begins an appeal by writing to the PSEM and providing an outline of the decision he/she is appealing and the reasons why the decision is being appealed. The Appeal Form of the PSSAP may be used by the student to make his/her appeal.

Appeals are to be held at the convenience of the student as much as possible and within 60 days from the time the student files the appeal.

If expenses are involved in hearing the appeal, the DTFNE will cover necessary expenses, but not an honorarium from the PS education funding budget.



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## University College Entrance Program Support

University and College Entrance Preparation (UCEP) programs are offered at Canadian universities and community colleges to enable students to attain the academic requirements for entrance into degree, diploma or certificate programs. This section details the terms and conditions under which the DTFNE would provide financial support to eligible students who are accepted into UCEP programs.

Student eligibility for support is contingent upon the following conditions:

1. The applicant must be a member of the Dene Tha' First Nation who resides in Canada and has been accepted for enrollment in a Canadian PS institute offering the UCEP program.
2. The applicant must be at least 21 years of age as of September 1<sup>st</sup> in the year in which he/she applies for support from the DTFNE.
3. At the time of enrolment in the UCEP program the applicant must have attained a minimum of 5 one-year courses a grade 11 level or the equivalent from the following subject areas: English/French, a second language, mathematics, history, geography, social studies, chemistry, physics, and biology. A student possessing a solid grade 10 Math, Social Studies, and English and scoring adequately on a Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) exam may also qualify for UCEP.
4. The applicant must provide a letter to the PSEM from the PS institution offering the UCEP program stating that: The student can attain the academic level for university or college entrance within the period of one to two academic years; or the student will be accepted at a regular university or college credit program upon successful completion of the UCEP program.
5. The applicant must not have been previously sponsored by the DTFNE for any other PS educational programs. Exemptions to this condition may be made for medical reasons.

New students seeking sponsorship must be interviewed by the DTFNE PSEM prior to applying for entrance to a PS institute. The PSEM will give the student a DTFNE application package and verbally outline the procedure to follow and describe sponsorship details, limits, and guidelines.

At the end of the first term of the UCEP program the student must provide the PSEM with a progress report from the PS institution confirming successful completions of the first term of the UCEP academic year and showing that he/she has obtained the prerequisites for entry into a diploma or credit program. This is a requirement for continued sponsorship for the next term of the UCEP program.

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A UCEP student must provide the PSEM with an official transcript of his/her grades at the end of the academic year. Students attending PS institutions that do not normally provide transcripts at the end of a semester (such as University of Alberta) must submit an official transcript from the Registrar's Office.

Support levels for tuition and living costs will be similar to those provided to PS students. The following list references applicable sections of the PSSAP which also apply to sponsorship support for UCEP students;

1. Application fee support
2. Tuition and compulsory student fees
3. Books and supplies support
4. Examination and interview fees
5. Tutoring assistance
6. Travel and moving expense
7. Support for living expenses
8. Damage deposit support
9. Distance education or e-learning

In recognition of a student's commitment to furthering his/her education and the hard work that is required to complete a PS educational program, a student who has successfully completed his/her UCEP program will be provided with a cultural gift award to emphasize the cultural and traditional significance of his/her accomplishment.

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## Definitions and Terminology

This identifies definitions of terms and acronyms used within the Post Secondary Student Assistance Program description.

**Academic Year** – is defined by the Post Secondary Institution, but will not be less than eight months in duration.

**Administering Organization** – refers to the Dene Tha' First Nation Education, the Band department responsible for administering the Post Secondary Student Assistance Program.

**Band** – is defined by the *Indian Act*, but used to collectively describe all Dene Tha' First Nation members.

**Band List** – a compiled list of members approved by the Band; these members on the Band list have access to services provided by the Dene Tha' First Nation.

**Canadian Public PS Institution** – is a post secondary institution that receives the majority of its funding from federal and provincial governments.

**Dene Tha' First Nation Education (DTFNE)** – the band controlled and operated department that administers the educational affairs of the Dene Tha' First Nation.

**Dene Tha' First Nation (DTFN)** – includes Chateh, Bushe River, and Meander River occupied reserves and population who have access to band administered services including educational services.

**Department** – refers to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

**Dependent** – a person who is dependent upon the student, as defined by Revenue Canada, and who does not receive taxable or non-taxable income in excess of income level allowed for a spouse by Canada Revenue Agency.

**Dependent Spouse** – a person who is married to the student, or who has lived in a common-law relationship with the student, for a period of one year prior to the application for Post Secondary educational sponsorship. This person is dependent upon the student and does not have part-time or full-time employment for which he/she receives taxable or non-taxable income in excess of the level of income allowed for a dependent spouse by Canada Revenue Agency.

**Full-time Student** – as defined by the Post Secondary Institution, but living allowance support will be denied to any student taking less than four (4) courses of three (3) credit-hour courses on campus for each term of study.

**Home Study** – courses of study done through distance education or e-learning at the student home. Students taking home study are considered part-time students.

**Membership Register** – a compiled list that is maintained by DTFN Membership Clerk and Indigenous Northern Affairs Canada. Also include Bill C-31 re-instated first nation.

**On-Reserve and Off-Reserve Students** – are as defined by the student's normal place of residence.

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**Part-time Student** – as defined by the Post Secondary Institution, any student taking less than four (4) courses of three (3) credit-hour courses on campus for each term of study or students engaged in home study programs.

**Post Secondary (PS) Education** – means a program of studies offered by a Post Secondary institution, for which completion of high school/secondary school studies or its equivalent is a prerequisite.

**Post Secondary (PS) Institutes** – include degree, diploma, and certificate granting institutions that are recognized by a province and include educational institutions affiliated with, or delivering accredited post secondary programs by arrangement with a post secondary institution.

**Post Secondary Education Manager (PSEM)** – an employee of the Dene Tha' First Nation Education who administers the Post Secondary Student Assistance Program and directly interacts with all sponsored Post Secondary students.

**Private and Foreign Post Secondary Institution** – is a Canadian or foreign post secondary institution which receives the majority of its funding from sources other than governments.

**Program of Study or Studies** – includes all Post Secondary programs of at least one academic year in duration leading to a certificate, diploma or degree. Programs less than one academic year which are prerequisites to post secondary programs of at least one year are included.

**Residence** – a dwelling owned or rented by the student and occupied while attending the Post Secondary Institute during his/her program of study.

**Resident** – an eligible Treaty/registered first nation who has resided in Canada for twelve (12) consecutive months prior to his/her application for sponsorship. This includes students who have been living outside of Canada to pursue their studies.

**Semester/Term** – refers to a part of the academic year as defined by the Post Secondary Institutions. Semester/Term are typically four months in duration as usually cover the periods from September to December, January to April, and May to August.

**Student** – is an individual who has successfully applied to be funded under the PSSAP and fulfills the conditions of the programs in order to receive financial support to successfully attain a Post Secondary diploma, degree, or certificate.

**Treaty/Registered First Nation** – a person whose name has been entered in the Indian Registry maintained by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada as defined by the *Indian Act*.

**Tuition Assistance** – includes the student's fees for registration, tuition and compulsory/mandatory fees and the cost of books and supplies that are listed as program requirements by the Post Secondary Institutes. Practicum fees are also considered part of the tuition fees.