

**2013-14: UA14**

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Executive Heads of Provincially-Assisted Universities,  
Collège universitaire dominicain, Collège universitaire de  
Hearst

**COPY:** Council of Ontario Universities  
Council on University Planning and Analysis  
Financial Aid Offices at Provincially-Assisted Universities  
Registrars at Provincially-Assisted Universities  
University Members of the Working Group on Tuition Billing  
and Associated Fees

**FROM:** Nancy Naylor  
Assistant Deputy Minister

**DATE:** December 5, 2013

**SUBJECT:** **Revisions to the University Tuition Fee Framework  
Guidelines**

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As you are aware, as part of the Ministry's consideration of a new tuition fee framework, it committed to address other tuition-related issues through a separate consultation process.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your engagement and participation in the Working Group on Tuition Billing and Associated Fees. The Working Group provided valuable feedback on:

1. The timing of tuition deposits, subsequent payments and fees charged for deferring payments;
2. Program/flat fee tuition structures where students who study at or above a certain threshold of a normal course load are charged full-time tuition fees;
3. The process for billing tuition costs to eligible students 'net' of non-repayable grants; and
4. Institutional practices and Ministry policies related to compulsory ancillary fees.

The Ministry has made every effort to consider each stakeholder's comments and views before finalizing the revised tuition fee framework guidelines attached. The policies

included in the guidelines, outlined below, attempt to strike a fair balance for both universities and students through the following policy changes:

### **Tuition Payments and Dates**

These policy changes introduce requirements that will guide institutions in their tuition billing practices. To a large extent, these requirements reflect the timing of OSAP disbursements to students. Over the past ten years, the number of full-time students supported by OSAP has increased to 61%, a significant change from 33% in 2002-03. Given the reality that the ability to pay tuition for a majority of students in the system is now tied to the OSAP program, the new requirements are intended to ensure that students clearly see a link between their tuition payment deadlines and the availability of OSAP support by academic term. These requirements also reflect the reality for institutions that OSAP's payment practices ensure that tuition payments are made on behalf of OSAP-eligible students.

These policy changes are being introduced with the expectation that universities will implement them for the 2014-15 academic year. The Ministry recognizes that some universities, due to system changes required, may not be able to fully implement these changes until 2015-16. However, these tuition billing practices will be mandatory as of 2015-16.

These changes include the following measures:

- Universities will be required to provide all students with the option of per-term billing without being charged a fee.
- Universities may require a maximum deposit of the greater of \$500 or 10 per cent of annual tuition fees, up to three months before the start of the student's first term of study in a program. Typically this date will fall in early June of each year for programs that begins in September.
- This deposit requirement may be charged before the first term of study each year and may be charged to all students, including those who expect to receive OSAP support. This recognizes the needs of universities which require confirmation of the acceptance of admission offers in order to appropriately plan for the delivery of programs. Universities are asked to continue to be receptive to students who request a deferral of tuition deposits for financial reasons.
- Up to \$500 of this deposit may be non-refundable if the student does not commence, or return for, a program with the university. Universities are asked to make accommodations and refund deposits to students who withdraw for reasonable circumstances (e.g., parental or medical leave).
- Universities may set a deadline for the payment of the remainder of the term's tuition no earlier than one month before the start of the study period. Typically this date would fall in early August of each year for a program that begins in September.
- For students who have an OSAP entitlement as of one month prior to the start of the study period, the due date for the remainder of the term's tuition must be deferred until the start of the term to align with the OSAP disbursement date.

- The Ministry will continue to provide an electronic file to universities so that universities are aware of which students are responsible for meeting this deadline, and which students are entitled to have their tuition deadline deferred until the start of the study period.
- OSAP will continue to issue funding to students with complete applications up to one week prior to the start of the study period.
- Tuition payments for subsequent terms for students not receiving OSAP support will be due no earlier than one month before the start of the respective term. Universities may require payment for the Winter term in mid-November, in recognition of the December holiday break. For students receiving OSAP support, these payments will be due no earlier than the start date for that term.
- Following these dates, universities will be able to charge reasonable and transparent late fees to ensure timeliness of payment.

### **Program/Flat Fees**

- For universities that charge students on a program/flat fees basis, the minimum course load threshold will be raised to 80 per cent of a normal course load. This will take place over a three year period, with no mandatory changes for 2014-15; moving to 70 per cent in 2015-16; and to 80 per cent by 2016-17.
- Universities that use a program/flat fee structure will be required to refrain from charging students for additional courses taken over and above a normal course load.
- Universities must have policies in place, and publicize these policies, for students with permanent disabilities which require a reduced course load as a learning accommodation, to allow these students to be exempted from paying tuition fees on a program/flat fee basis.
- The moratorium on new program/flat-fee tuition structures will remain in place for the length of the tuition framework.

### **Ancillary Fees**

- Universities may not charge an ancillary fee for confirmation of credential completion and for providing a graduation certificate, beginning in 2014-15.
- Fees for digital learning materials that are the property of the student, which can include test/assessment tools, have been added to the list of exemptions from the requirement for an ancillary fee protocol.

The attached Tuition Fee Framework Guidelines provide additional details about these new policies and requirements.

The ancillary fee policies previously communicated through the *Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual* have been incorporated in the attached *Tuition Fee Framework and Ancillary Fee Guidelines*. These guidelines supersede and replace the ancillary fee policies included in the Operating Manual. By incorporating these policies, the attached new guidelines are designed to streamline information about, and make it easier for institutions to comply with, recent changes to Ministry requirements.

The Ministry is happy to work with institutions to clarify any of the policies outlined in the guidelines to ensure they are implemented in a timely manner. If you have any questions related to the tuition billing section of the revised guidelines, please contact Sam Andrey at (416) 327-7522 or [Sam.Andrey@ontario.ca](mailto:Sam.Andrey@ontario.ca); questions related to the other sections of the guidelines including updates to program/flat fee tuition structures and ancillary fees be directed to Mehul Mehta at (416) 314-6912 or [Mehul.Mehta@ontario.ca](mailto:Mehul.Mehta@ontario.ca).

Thank you for your patience as the Ministry worked with the sector on developing these policies and, again, for your sector's feedback and representation on the technical tuition-related consultations.

Sincerely,



Nancy Naylor

Encl.