

URSU Student Support Funds Bylaw

Policy owner: Vice President Student Affairs

Audience: All members

Approved: Annual General Meeting October 27, 2016

Last Reviewed: May 2021

Review Schedule: Annually

1 - Introduction

The University of Regina Students' Union has created Student Support Funds designed to support students in need in particular areas. The Vice President Student Affairs and Student Advocate in accordance with this Bylaw manages these funds. This Bylaw also includes provisions for assisting the decisions of the Vice President Student Affairs and Student Advocate and for general management of the funds.

2 – Definitions

- **Levy** – The Levy is comprised of the funds that are collected each semester from students for the purpose supporting the funds.
- **Principle** – The principle portion of the fund is the fund balance at the end of the previous fiscal year
- **Interest** – Interest income comprises all income generated from the fund during a fiscal year
- **Funds** – Both the Emergency Bursary Fund and the Emotional Wellness Fund

3 - Policy

3.1 – Universal Criteria

The Student Advocate shall evaluate each student support funds application using the universal criteria and bursary criteria, then submit all the evaluations to Vice President Student Affairs for final approval.

1. Membership in the URSU as defined by the Bylaws of the URSU
2. A demonstration of financial need which includes the following:
 - a. An indication of income level and/or financial standing of the applicant
 - b. Existing sources of financial assistance already received by the applicant in the past four months;
 - c. A personal statement of need provided by the applicant;
 - d. If applicable, the submission of receipts and/or other method of verifying payment for the item or service covered by a specific bursary;
3. If applicable, any other universal criteria agreed upon by the Student Advocate and the Executive Committee.

3.2 – Bursary Criteria

As student bursary programs have specific requirements, Student Advocate shall evaluate the applications based on specific criteria, then submit all the evaluations to Vice President Student Affairs for final approval.

3.2.1 Emergency Bursary Fund

Normally, members may receive no more than \$1,000 (or \$1,500 for those with dependents) every two fiscal years:

In certain exceptional circumstances, the Vice President Student Affairs may recommend that up to \$2,000 be awarded to an applicant, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee. Amendments of this fund will be made out to the student in the amount approved by the Student Advocate.

- a. An additional, itemized list of all the expenses to which the disbursement would go towards mitigating if approved;
- b. An indication of the number of dependents the applicant has.
- c. Emergency bursaries are subjected but not limited to help students to pay off their bills.

Certain types of expenses are ineligible under normal circumstances. This includes:

- vehicle insurance; vehicle registration; drivers license;
- cable television; internet charges;
- credit card debts; bank loans;
- exceptional long distance charges;
- fines or bail money
- education costs

Typically the fund shall be used to cover costs like:

- food; shelter; utilities;
- child care; transportation;
- other unforeseen emergencies (family, legal, medical, dental . . .).

3.2.2 Emotional Wellness Fund

Students are eligible for reimbursement of up to 5 services each semester, or a maximum dollar amount of \$500. Funds will be disbursed via cheque made out to the applicant.

Costs covered by the emotional Wellness Fund include, but are not limited to:

- Counselling services,
- Physical and non-physical wellness memberships/classes
- Professional Psychology services

This fund is not typically intended to cover the sorts of expenses that are covered by the Emergency Bursary Fund.

3.2 – Application Process

- a. An online application form will be available to the membership on URSU Universe platform, and maintained by the Vice President Student Affairs and/or their designate.
- b. The Student Advocate, or executive designate, will be responsible for receiving and presenting all the reviews and feedback of the applications to the Vice President Student Affairs for final approval.

3.3 – Awarding a Bursary (Normal)

Based on the documents and statements obtained by the Student Advocate, the Student Advocate will submit the initial approval with review and feedback to Vice President Student Affairs to determine the level of student need presented. The Advocate and Vice President Student Affairs will then make one of the following decisions:

1. Awarding funding to the student in an amount that is proportionate with the demonstrated need.
2. Denial of funding to the student (especially if funding request is deemed to be trivial, frivolous or not in good faith)

If possible, bills shall be paid directly to the creditor.

If the amount that is recommended by the Student Advocate exceeds the maximum amount for that fund, the Student Advocate and Vice President Student Affairs must have the dispersal approved by the Executive Committee or the Board as appropriate. This process shall respect the confidentiality guidelines laid out in section 3.4 of this policy.

Funds disbursed under the Emergency Bursary Program and Emotional Wellness Fund are considered to be taxable income. Students will be required to show their social insurance number prior to funds being distributed.

Funds may be disbursed directly to applicants via cheque.

3.4 – Confidentiality

The Student Advocate and Vice President Student Affairs shall direct contact with applicants, both when considering the application process and when disbursing funds.

An applicant's identity will not be revealed in connection with their circumstances to any persons outside of the Office of the Student Advocate and Vice President Student Affairs, except as necessary during an appeals process.

3.5 – Management of the Funds

The Funds may be invested, in a manner determined by URSU's Executive Committee.

Money for the bursaries shall be derived from 90% of the earned interest from the previous year as well as any portion of the annual levy that is collected that is necessary. The remaining 10% of earned interest will be assigned as follows:

- 5% will be transferred into the Student Advocate budget to offset administrative costs
- 5% will be reinvested into to fund to ensure future growth.

To ensure continued growth of the funds, money not disbursed during a fiscal year will be reinvested into the principle of the Fund.

The principal of the fund may be used to offer additional emergency bursaries or to cover administrative costs as necessary, to be approved by the Executive Committee or the Board of Directors (if such an expenditure would normally be approved by the board, as outlined in the Financial policy) on a case-by-case basis.

Once the designated funds have been depleted no more funds will be granted in that fiscal year.

The funds shall be reported as part of URSU's regular budget updates.

3.6 – Appeals

Students have the right to appeal decisions made by the Student Advocate and Vice President Student Affairs regarding their fund application to the Appeals Committee.

This committee shall be comprised of 2 board members and the Vice-President Student Affairs. This committee will meet as needed to consider appeals. During the appeal it shall consider if need was adequately established in order to ensure that the correct decision was made by the Student Advocate and Vice President Student Affairs. It may only consider information that was presented during the application process. If new information is made available that would influence the outcome of an Application, the Committee may recommend that the applicant re-apply for funding.

4 - Consequences for Noncompliance

If the Emergency Bursary Fund/Emotional Wellness Fund bylaw is not followed for any reason, funds may be managed or disbursed improperly. Failure to make financial decisions that are in the best interests of the corporation can have consequences including expulsion from the URSU, (as laid out in Article 3 of the URSU constitution) recall (as laid out in Article VII of the URSU Constitution) and further legal action being brought against the member (at the discretion of the URSU).

Failure to properly manage funds could also negatively impact URSU's reputation among its membership and in the greater community.

5- Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 – Student Advocate

The Student Advocate shall:

- Assist students in filling out application forms
- Process Applications and submit reviews & feedback to VP Student Affairs in a timely manner
- Notify applicants of the outcome of their applications in a timely manner
- Act as a responsible fiduciary member of the organization
- Ensure compliance with this policy throughout the year
- Remain impartial and unbiased in all decisions
- Ensure proper need is identified and justified
- Warrant that students name, circumstance, demographic, etc. remains confidential
- Work in conjunction with the Accounting Department, VP Operations and Finance, VP Student Affairs and the Financial Policy to ensure proper financial practices when allocating funds
- Alert Appeals Committee of appeals and provide necessary information in order for the Appeals Committee to make an informed decision
- Keep VP Student Affairs accountable throughout the funding process

5.2 – Appeals Committee

- Ensure appeals are handled in a timely manner
- Remain impartial and unbiased in all decisions
- Act professionally and without judgement to other Committee members

5.3 – Vice President Student Affairs

- Call all meetings of the Appeals Committee as needed
- Review all the applications and make final approval on the Student Support Funds with the signing authority
- Remain impartial and unbiased in all decisions
- Warrant that students name, circumstance, demographic, etc. remains confidential
- Ensure proper need is identified and justified
- Keep Student Advocate accountable throughout the funding process

6 - Related Information

- URSU's Constitution, Bylaws and Policy:
<http://ursu.ca/governance/constitution-bylaws-and-policy>