



**Tuesday, December 22, 2020**

Assistant Deputy Minister Kelly Shields  
Postsecondary Education Division, Ministry of Colleges & Universities  
16th Floor  
315 Front Street West  
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8

**RE: UTSU Submission on Ontario's Tuition Fee Framework & Ancillary Fee Guidelines**

Dear Assistant Deputy Minister Shields,

As the Executive Committee of the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU), representing over 38,000 full-time undergraduate students at the University of Toronto - St. George campus, we are writing to you today to provide recommendations for the upcoming revision of the Ontario Tuition Fee Framework & Ancillary Fee Guidelines. We believe that post-secondary education should be accessible to all willing and qualified students. Therefore, we urge the government to continue building a fair tuition fee framework and a robust financial aid apparatus to support students, particularly low-income and first-generation students. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has put increased financial burdens on students working to make ends meet, and the tuition fee framework should strive to support students throughout these challenging circumstances.

**With this in mind, the University of Toronto Students' Union offers the following recommendations to improve Ontario's Tuition Fee Framework & Ancillary Fee Guidelines:**

- Continue to freeze tuition across all programs while increasing operating grants until students are contributing approximately one-third of universities' total operating budgets.
- Eliminate deferral fees and late fees for tuition incurred during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years.
- Reduce tuition fees for previously deregulated professional undergraduate programs, such as computer science, bioinformatics, and data science, so that they are equal to tuition fees for other undergraduate arts & science programs, while proportionately increasing operating grants to offset the cost of this reduction.
- Mandate that universities provide an alternative method of grading, or additional financial aid, where students are required to purchase digital learning materials for assessments that make up a portion of a students' grade.

Rising tuition has been a concern of students for many years, and we believe that a tuition freeze, if implemented alongside increases to operating grants for universities and investments in financial aid, would benefit students. This would prevent students from being burdened by tuition increases, while ensuring that universities are still able to provide high quality education and services for students.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many students and parents have lost income and employment, or seen reduced hours. Students and their families may need additional time to find employment and come up with money to pay tuition fees. We recommend implementing a moratorium on deferral fees and late fees on tuition for the current and upcoming academic years, to give students time to pay their tuition without facing financial penalties.

At the University of Toronto, students in computer science, bioinformatics, and data science pay higher tuition fees than students in other regulated undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Arts &



Science, despite receiving the same degree. The reasoning can be traced back to these programs' deregulation in 1998, and subsequent re-regulation in 2006. We recommend reducing tuition fees in these programs and supplementing this reduction with a proportional increase in operating grants, to increase access to these fields, while ensuring fairness in tuition fees and alleviating additional financial pressure facing students in these programs.

Finally, we recommend that the provincial government mandate that universities' policies on digital learning materials specifically require an alternative grading method or financial aid. At the University of Toronto, the *Provostial Guidelines on the Use of Digital Learning Materials* establishes a limit on the cost of these materials at \$65 per half credit, and mandates that an alternative method of grading be provided if materials exceed this cost. While this threshold is appreciated, these guidelines still allow for students to be charged a total of \$650 in an academic year for digital learning materials, in addition to tuition fees. These costs place an undue financial burden on students, particularly low-income students, and we recommend alternative grading methods be provided for all digital learning materials.

Our recommendations are designed both to alleviate financial burdens students face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and address some of the long-standing problems with access to post-secondary education. We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations, and we hope that they will be taken into consideration in the upcoming Tuition Fee Framework & Ancillary Fee Guidelines.

Yours,

The University of Toronto Students' Union Executive Committee

**CC:**

Minister Ross Romano  
Deputy Minister Shelley Tapp  
Parliamentary Assistant David Piccini  
Mr. Chris Glover

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