

# **ONTARIO TRILLIUM SCHOLARSHIPS**

## **CONDITIONS OF FUNDING**

Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development

**Date Issued:** April 2017

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW..... 3**

**Purpose of the Program .....3**

**Program Overview.....3**

**CONDITIONS OF FUNDING ..... 4**

**Eligible Institutions .....4**

**Eligibility Criteria and Recipient Selection.....4**

**Funding .....8**

**As noted above, institutions are reminded that they can re-allocate funds to eligible recipients and that re-allocated funds are not subject to recovery, as they are allocated funds. ....8**

**Administrative Requirements.....9**

***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* .....9**

**Annual Report to MAESD ..... 10**

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of the Program**

The Ontario Trillium Scholarships (OTS) program is a significant initiative to attract more of the best qualified international students to Ontario for PhD studies.<sup>1</sup>

The OTS program also increases the profile and prestige of Ontario universities internationally, and allows institutions to develop additional capacity in their areas of expertise and excellence.

Raising the profile of international education in Ontario and increasing the number of international students, especially at the doctoral level, contributes directly to Ontario's economic performance by bringing highly educated individuals to the province.

### **Program Overview**

Each OTS is worth \$40,000 annually to recipient PhD students for four years. The total volume of scholarships in any given year will be 300.

The program is cost-shared between the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) and eligible Ontario universities using a 2/3:1/3 government to institution ratio. Of the \$40,000 annual OTS award value, \$26,666 will be provided to eligible universities by MAESD, and universities will provide an additional \$13,333 in value in accordance with these Conditions of Funding.

Each publicly assisted Ontario university with PhD enrolments as of 2010-11 received funding for at least two Ontario Trillium Scholarships annually. The remaining scholarship funding was allocated in proportion to an institution's overall (both international and domestic) 2009-2010 PhD enrolments. Participation by a university in the cost-sharing requirement and all other provisions of this document is a condition of receiving this funding from MAESD. The Ministry reserves the right to review the OTS annual allocations periodically.

Ontario universities are responsible for recruiting and selecting international OTS recipients, based on merit, and in accordance with these Conditions of Funding. MAESD has no direct relationship with OTS candidates or recipients.

---

<sup>1</sup> Other 4-year doctoral degrees may be eligible (i.e. SJD) if the recipient meets all eligibility criteria

## CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

### **Eligible Institutions**

Eligible institutions for the purposes of the OTS program are:

Brock University  
Carleton University  
University of Guelph  
Lakehead University  
Laurentian University  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
McMaster University  
University of Ottawa  
Queen's University  
Ryerson University  
University of Toronto  
Trent University  
University of Ontario Institute of Technology  
University of Waterloo  
University of Western Ontario  
University of Windsor  
York University

The annual scholarships and associated funding allocation will be issued each year.

### **Application Process**

Each institution has an application process for the program that is open to all prospective international PhD students and describes in a transparent manner, the process and criteria by which the selection of recipients will be made.

Recipients selected by the institution must meet, and continue to meet as indicated, the recipient eligibility requirements set out below.

### **Eligibility Criteria and Recipient Selection**

Academic merit is the defining criterion for the selection of OTS recipients by institutions. OTS recipients must have achieved a first-class average, as determined by each university, in each of the two years of full-time study prior to awarding of the OTS.

### **General Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for an OTS, a candidate must meet all of the criteria below:

- Be an international student:
  - International students are students who have received a temporary resident visa as a member of the student class under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) on the first day of class;

- Domestic and refugee students who are eligible for government financial assistance (e.g. under the Ontario Student Assistance Program) are ineligible to receive an OTS;
- Domestic and international students whose enrolment is counted for the purpose of calculating the institution's Operating Grants are ineligible to receive an OTS;
- See section "Transition to Permanent Residency Status" for OTS recipients who transition to permanent residency during the course of their studies.
- Be intending to pursue full-time graduate studies at an eligible Ontario university at the doctoral level. A full-time doctoral student is a student who must:
  - Be studying to earn a doctoral degree at an eligible institution;
  - Be pursuing their studies on a full-time basis;
  - Be identified by the institution as a full-time student;
  - Be geographically available and visit their campus regularly;
  - Not be employed outside the university except by permission of their academic supervisor.
- Not be intending to enrol in a qualifying or make-up year;
- Not currently be studying at an Ontario postsecondary institution at the undergraduate or graduate level, and
- Not have concurrently accepted a scholarship or fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), or the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), or be in receipt of an Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS), Vanier Scholarship or Ontario Graduate Scholarship in Science and Technology (OGSST) award.
- Not have failed to repay all or any part of an unearned Ontario Trillium Scholarship.

Once selected, recipients must enrol at the awarding university within the fiscal year that the scholarship was awarded. Recipients must be enrolled and remain enrolled as a full-time student in an eligible program. Recipients who withdraw, transfer to part-time status, or fail to complete the term, without prior consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies or other official identified by the institution, are no longer eligible for the OTS.

During the duration of the award, an OTS recipient may change the program of study with the prior written approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies or other institutionally designated official.

An OTS recipient may accept research assistantships, part-time teaching positions, or other employment that does not affect their status as a full-time graduate student. The institution should satisfy itself that such work opportunities comply with federal guidelines established by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) with regards to on-campus and off-campus employment for international students.

An OTS recipient, while still under academic supervision, may be absent from their eligible institution of study, e.g. visiting libraries, conducting field work, or attending a graduate course at another institution, provided that if any such period of absence exceeds four weeks in any one term, written evidence shall be available in the Graduate

Studies Office to the effect that the absence has the approval of the Chairperson of the department and the Dean of Graduate Studies. However, recipients lose eligibility status if participating in a paid educational leave or sabbatical.

### **Leaves of Absence and Deferrals**

An OTS recipient may be granted a deferral or leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, not to exceed on any one occasion, more than 12 consecutive months, for reasons including:

- Immigration process;
- Maternity or parental leave;
- Family or medical leave; or
- Compassionate leave (e.g. bereavement).

Each institution shall use its own discretion in determining whether the leave of absence or deferral is appropriate and shall request supporting documentation for the leave of absence or deferral (as applicable).

The university's policy concerning length of allowable leaves of absence from or deferral of a program shall apply, where the allowable leave of absence is 12 months or less. Terms across the leave of absence should be considered sequential.

Unspent ministry funds will not be recovered for students on an approved leave of absence or deferral of 12 months or less, if proper documentation is in place, however the interest accrued on the ministry funding for the period of absence will be recovered. The Ministry will only allow institutions to retain funding for one leave of absence or deferral per recipient.

For recipients who have been granted a leave of absence or deferral, institutions will retain the option to reallocate the award to a new recipient and provide the initial OTS recipient with an award upon their return to studies at the institution. This award shall be provided from the institution's total allocation for the year in which the recipient returns to studies.

**FIGURE I: Scenario Illustration for Leaves of Absence and Deferrals**

<b>Institution allowed to keep the funding for deferral or leave of absence (Year 2)</b>						
	<b># of Students</b>					
<b>Year 1</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Year 2</b>	1 <sup>A</sup>	3 <sup>B</sup>	2	2	2	2
<b>Year 3</b>	2	1	3	2	2	2
<b>Year 4</b>	2	2	1	3 <sup>C</sup>	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

A. Student takes leave in Year 2. Institution keeps \$26,666. Unspent funds from Year 1 recorded for Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3.

B. Two Year 1 students go on to Year 2, and Year 2 student returns from leave.

C. Institution uses \$26,666 in Year 4 to support 9 recipients, instead of 8.

**Length of Award**

The Ontario Trillium Scholarships are to be awarded to international PhD candidates for a maximum of four years.

Awards are to be automatically awarded to the student for each of the three years following the first year, provided the student maintains good academic standing (as defined by the eligible institution) and continues to meet recipient eligibility requirements. Students need not reapply each year for the Ontario Trillium Scholarship.

**Transition to Permanent Resident Status**

OTS recipients must be international students to be eligible to be awarded this scholarship. However, OTS recipients, like all international students studying in Ontario, may apply for permanent residency status during their study period. Should an OTS recipient become a permanent resident at any time after the beginning of classes, the institution would be eligible to receive operating grant support.

Should an OTS recipient obtain permanent residency status after being awarded the Ontario Trillium Scholarship, but prior to beginning their studies at the university awarding the scholarship, the recipient is no longer eligible for the OTS.

OTS recipients who defer entry and obtain permanent residency status prior to or during the deferral period are no longer eligible to receive an OTS.

Should an OTS recipient obtain permanent residency status after the beginning of the first semester of study at the university which awarded the OTS, she or he will continue to be eligible for the OTS for the balance of their renewable OTS scholarship for a total

of four years. Ministry funding toward the recipient's OTS will continue, subject to all other OTS criteria continuing to be met.

### **Re-allocation of Awards**

Where recipients have left the program, completed their PhD, or are no longer eligible for the OTS prior to receiving four years of the OTS, institutions retain the option to reallocate the remaining part of the award to a new recipient. The new recipient must meet the eligibility criteria and the OTS must be offered for four years. The institution can provide the OTS through its annual allocation (perhaps by reducing future intakes) or by providing the full funding for years of the scholarship not funded by the ministry.

### **Funding**

MAESD funding is provided on a government fiscal year basis (i.e. April 1 to March 31), and must be expended by the institution in the same fiscal year as provided. MAESD funds that are not expended by end of a fiscal year will be subject to the financial recovery policy described below.

Ministry funding will be provided in two installments: The first payment will be made in the spring and the second payment will be made in fall/winter of the same fiscal year.

### **Recovery of Ministry Funding**

The Ministry has obligations regarding the recovery of unspent funds under the *Financial Administration Act* (FAA) and must comply with the government's Transfer Payment Accountability (TPA) Directive and Cash Management Directive. These directives require that unused transfer payment funding be recovered.

In accordance with the above-mentioned directives, MAESD funds for OTS will be subject to a financial recovery as follows:

- Institutions that do not award OTS scholarships in any given fiscal year, either in full or partially (due, for example, to lack of confirmed recipients, deferrals, leaves of absence or withdrawals) will notify the Ministry of unspent funds in their annual report.
- Unused funds that result from the deferral or leave of absence of 12 months or less of a still-eligible OTS student are not subject to recovery. Interest from these unspent funds will be recovered.
- Unused funds will be recovered through adjustments to the university's future OTS instalments.

As noted above, institutions are reminded that they can re-allocate funds to eligible recipients and that re-allocated funds are not subject to recovery, as they are allocated funds.

Institutions are also reminded that recipients are not eligible for the OTS if the recipient:

- Transfers to another institution;

- Withdraws from the program;
- Loses full-time status;
- Fails to maintain good academic standing as determined by the institution; or
- Otherwise loses eligibility for continued receipt of the OTS as set out in these conditions of funding.

For recipients who become ineligible, awards are prorated up to the last month of full-time studies completed by the recipient. No repayment will be required with respect to the recipient's completed years, semesters or full months of study prior to the loss of the student's OTS eligibility.

Institutions are responsible for recovering funds from recipients, as necessary. Failure or inability by the institution to recover OTS funds from the student does not limit or waive the institution's obligations to repay the Ministry as identified in these Conditions of Funding.

### **Institutional Contribution to OTS Funding**

There are no restrictions on the source of institutional matching funds, with the following two exceptions:

1. Institutions must ensure compliance with the *Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual*, Section 1 which identifies "student aid" and "assisted/sponsored research" as ineligible expenditures for Ministry operating grants. Institutions are required to ensure any employment offered to OTS recipients as part of scholarship funding (ex. a teaching-assistantship) complies with this directive.
2. Funds reserved under the "Tuition Set-Aside Program" which requires universities to set aside 30% of increased tuition revenue to assist students in financial need cannot be used for OTS purposes because Set-Aside funds are to be used solely for needs-based purposes. The OTS is a merit-based award.

The institutional portion of each OTS award may be provided to the scholarship recipient, in full or in part, in the form of on-campus employment which may include, but is not limited to, teaching-assistantships and research-assistantships.

### **Administrative Requirements**

#### **Tax Implications**

Institutions are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate tax forms are provided to students on an annual basis to allow for accurate filing and reporting of scholarship income for award recipients, in compliance with federal and provincial taxation law.

### **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

Each institution will ensure that it complies with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* in administering the OTS.

## **Annual Report to MAESD**

At the end of each fiscal year, the university will provide an annual report to the Ministry electronically, which includes the following:

- The total number of applications received;
- Without identifying the name of the recipient, provide the number of recipients in each year of study, the total value of scholarships, and Ministry share of the expenditures.
- The number of recipients who are on a leave of absence, have withdrawn from the program, and who have deferred entry as well as the cohort year, and supporting information;
- Amount of Ministry funding unspent due to a deferral of leave, as per the permitted exception, and interest associated with that funding;
- The number of recipients who are permanent residents or Canadian citizens (this may change during a recipients time in the program);
- The number of current or past recipients who complete the PhD credential in reporting year; and
- Attestation that the eligibility criteria of the program were adhered to in the granting all awards, and that Ministry funds were used appropriately.

Reports and reporting deadlines will be communicated to institutions each year.

Furthermore, institutions should continue to keep on record internally:

- Without identifying the name of the recipient, provide the program and year of study of each recipient as well as their country of citizenship, country of last terminal degree and last degree conferred;
- Nature and sources of the institutional matching funds;
- A balance sheet for spent and unspent Ministry funds, including student-level information for deferrals and leaves of absence;
- Copies of the application materials developed by the university for administering and awarding the OTS scholarships; and
- Attestation that the eligibility criteria of the program were adhered to in the granting all awards.

The annual report shall be signed by the Chief Financial Officer of the university and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

