

NRES statement on student financial realities (2025/2026 version)

As part of your application to the NRES graduate program, we would like you to know that whereas...

Information on current graduate tuition rates and fees at UNBC can be found here:

<https://www.unbc.ca/finance/accounts-receivable/fees-unbc>, **whereas internal graduate funding opportunities at UNBC are limited and competitive** and **whereas PhD tuition waivers do not include student fees.**

Funding availability varies widely across programs, supervisors and labs at UNBC. NRES has no universal guaranteed graduate student funding, so funding availability should be carefully discussed between supervisors and students. NRES programs are listed as 2-year Masters and 4 year PhD programs, and we recommend that – as much as possible -- graduate funding per student meet or exceed Tri Council Scholarship amounts (CIHR; NSERC; SSHRC). These are now \$27,000/year for Masters students (for one year) and \$40,000/year for PhD students (for three years) (https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NewsDetail-DetailNouvelles_eng.asp?ID=1518) and

The UNBC suggested graduate student costs of living can be found here:

<https://www.unbc.ca/financial-aid/financing-education> and

The BC Living Wage is for Prince George is \$22.93/hr (for a 35-hour work week)

(https://www.livingwagebc.ca/living_wage_rates). This is not a government-set minimum wage.

For more details, please see: https://www.livingwagebc.ca/what_is_living_wage and

The following recent information exists about average student debt loads in Canada:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710003601> and

And, Canadian average student debt loads are rising, and health and wellness impacts of financial stress are well documented (e.g. see https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/620e68df56083744894afe58/62100489ba0da570084f1c8b_01Factsheet-2021-11-Student-Debt-EN-02-01.pdf)

... The NRES Graduate Committee has adopted the following position regarding graduate student funding:

While funding varies widely, the NRES Program expects supervisors to *strive* for graduate student funding levels that meet or exceed the above standards set by the federal Tri Council Agency (CIHR; NSERC; SSHRC). While we recognize this will not be achievable in all cases, **all efforts should be taken** to provide funding levels to best support student success (ideally for all years of degree), and to discuss funding opportunities and constraints clearly with new applicants and with students moving through NRES degrees.

Supervisors should attempt to provide sufficient funding levels for students, and this process should include combinations of the following strategies:

- Providing stipends at or above Tri Council levels;
- Recognizing that granting and awarding is a dynamic process and that application success is not guaranteed, **only including committed/awarded funding (not pending funding) should be included in the Faculty of Environment Graduate Student Funding Information Sheet;**
- Ensuring sufficient student stipend amounts are included in grant proposals;
- Accepting fewer students if positions cannot be fully funded;
- Planning to fund graduate students in all years of their program (e.g., continually applying for funding if known grant durations are less than graduate program durations);
- Recognizing that funding commitments do not come with caveats. Should performance related issues arise, these can be addressed by completing the Annual Progress Report and using associated processes;
- Maintaining or enhancing committed stipends; students should not be penalized for income from Teaching Assistantship (TA) positions or awards/scholarships earned by students;
- Increasing stipend values through programs such as Mitacs, internal grants, and community, government or industrial partnerships;
- **Clearly communicating future funding availability to UNBC students in pre-acceptance discussions; and**
- **Mentoring students in award and grant applications. This is to maximize the probability of success, and to include professional development opportunities for trainees/students.**

Lastly, we remind all parties that supervisors cannot prevent students from taking on additional paid work on or off campus, as everyone's financial situations are different.

Applicant signature: _____

Prospective Supervisor: _____

Chair of Proposed Supervisor: _____

NRES Program Coordinator: _____

*note: you may want to revisit this form from time to time during degree progression if/when necessary and/or when changes arise

Faculty of Environment (NRES)

Graduate Student Funding Information Sheet

NOTE: Prospective students and proposed supervisors should discuss all pages of this form before signing it. Pages 3 & 4 must be filled out and signed (even if amounts listed are 0.)

Only guaranteed funds (funds in hand/funds obtained) should be included in the total funding amount calculation.

At UNBC, there are a limited number of graduate scholarships, and they are highly competitive (e.g. sometimes awarding only includes students with GPAs >4.0). Students are considered for the Graduate Entrance Research Scholarship (GERS) and BC Graduate Scholarship (BCGS) based on their eligibility once only, in the term closest to their arrival term. There are no significant internal awards for graduate students in upper years of their degrees. Many Canadian scholarships require Canadian citizenship or Permanent Residence status.

The applicant's file will not be considered complete and a Letter of Offer for admission will not be sent until this form is completed and returned to the NRES administrative assistant. Digital signatures should not be re-used if changes need to be made; signature dates should be close to the date of submission.

If admitted, funding indicated on this sheet will be included in the admission letter. Supervisors are responsible for providing funding listed here.

This form is intended to ensure that a feasible and realistic arrangement for personal and research funding of a graduate student applicant has been discussed and agreed upon by both the student applicant and the proposed supervisor in the MNRES, MA, or MSc in NRES, or NRES PhD degree program. It is intended to help the student applicant decide whether he/she/they can accept a graduate position at UNBC if an offer of admission is made. It should also be used by supervisors to calculate supervisor/lab funding commitments.

Before signing, applicants should fulsomely review information on tuition and fees provided on our website here: <https://www.unbc.ca/finance/accounts-receivable/fees-unbc>. Students should estimate their cost of living in addition to tuition; please see information to help students do so here: [Financing your university education | UNBC](#).

Applicants should also discuss expected time to completion with their prospective supervisor as continued funding and supervisor support may be limited to a limited number of years (e.g. the expectation that a Masters will be completed in 2 years).

Sources of Funding for Graduate Students

The annual costs of pursuing a graduate degree at UNBC can be covered by several sources (individually or in combination). Funding provided to students by scholarships, financial awards (internal or external to UNBC) and/or from the Supervisor's research grants, is contingent upon the student remaining in good academic standing. **One unsatisfactory Progress Report or two "needs improvement" Progress Reports can trigger a continuance review and may impact ongoing funding.**

UNBC Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries - Applicants are automatically considered for the Graduate Entrance Research Scholarship ([GERS](#)) award and the BC Graduate Scholarship (BCGS) provided they meet the eligibility criteria and have applied by the first deadline listed

here: <https://www.unbc.ca/admissions/graduate/graduate-application-intakes-and-deadlines>. Other awards may be available for application and can be found here: <https://selfservice.unbc.ca/BcFinaidSelfService/ssb/awardGuide#!/welcome/awardCriteriaSelecton/awardList>.

Funding from Research Grants:

Some supervisors provide financial support for students from research grants. Terms and expectations should be discussed and should align with UNBC roles described below. A stipend, fellowship or graduate student award (e.g. directly from SSHRC or NSERC to a student) allows the student to focus directly on their own work as they are awarded to do so.

Lab work or other Research Assistantship contracts (RAships; paid work contracts):

This is a contract to conduct research for or with your supervisor or another faculty member at UNBC. This paid research work can be related or unrelated to your main research/thesis/dissertation work, as discussed with the person offering you the contract. Before signing a contract, you should discuss the nature of the contract, working hours, **whether research and results can be used for the student thesis**, and other expectations (e.g. safety). Any significant changes to these understandings should require a contract revision.

Teaching Assistantships (TA):

A limited number of TAs are available each semester. At UNBC, TAs are unionized (CUPE 2278: <https://www.unbc.ca/labour-relations/cupe-2278>). **Supervisors cannot promise/guarantee TAs**. These are part of an open competition that students must find out about and apply for by indicated deadlines. They are awarded based on the best match between student teaching abilities and the needs of particular courses. To be considered for a TA contract, the student applicant must have a minimum GPA of 3.33 and complete a TA application form. UNBC is unable, for budgetary reasons, to guarantee TA awards. A full TA position requires approximately 12 hours per week of work during the semester but work hours can vary (e.g. grading-focused TAs will have peak hours around exams and assignments). If students are interested in a Teaching Assistantship, they must apply separately, before the application deadline, to enter the TA competition on the form provided in your application package for each semester. For more information, visit this website: <https://www.unbc.ca/career-opportunities/current-graduate-teaching-assistantship-postings>.

Self-financing:

Self-financing includes any source of funding contributed by the student, such as savings, payment for external paid work, etc. Masters and PhD programs are demanding and require many hours of reading, studying, writing, and hands-on work. While they can be combined with part-time work, full-time graduate studies are not easily combined with full-time work. Further, part-time or seasonal work may not be possible while undertaking your program (e.g. due to required fieldwork or limitations of a study permit). Part-time work can extend time to completion. The applicant and proposed supervisor should discuss such issues (e.g. financial needs and expectations; career aspirations) and try to balance their expectations.

Anticipated Research Costs

In addition to the cost of everyday living, some students may be required to pay all or part of their graduate research costs (e.g. travel to a field site or other research expenses such as compensating participants) and/or knowledge mobilization costs (e.g. going to conferences). The student applicant should discuss these with the proposed Supervisor. Students can also request mentoring/guidance in applying for related awards and grants (internal and external). Research funding is competitive and cannot be guaranteed if not in hand/indicated here.

Faculty of Environment (NRES)

Graduate Student Funding Information Sheet

Applicant name: _____

Degree sought: _____

Desired admission date: _____

Proposed Supervisor: _____

Proposed Co-Supervisor (if applicable): _____

Part A: The student will be supported by (including all that apply):

1) Secured student scholarships or awards *(If scholarships are pending or unsecured, please indicate \$ 0 below.)*

- Student has secured scholarship funds of \$ _____ per year from _____
_____ (sources). This scholarship(s) fund term is from _____ to _____ (year).

2) Secured supervisor research grants *(If research grants are pending or unsecured, please indicate \$ 0 below.)*

- Supervisor will provide minimum funding of \$ _____ per year from their research grant(s). This funding has been secured, and the commitment is made for _____ years from the start date.
- Co-supervisor (if there is one) will provide minimum funding of \$ _____ per year from their research grant(s). This funding has been secured, and the commitment is made for _____ years from the start date.

3) Applicant-provided funds (self-funding)

student will be self-funding this degree (note that international applicants should be aware of funding expectations for IRCC requirements)

NOTE: Both students and supervisors are encouraged to continue to apply for related funding throughout the student's degree.

Part B: The student will apply for (note this does not guarantee success):

- ☐ Competitive scholarships, grants, and awards (internal or external)
- ☐ Teaching assistantships (open competitive process with set deadlines)
- ☐ Not Applicable

Part C: Anticipated Research Costs will be provided by (include all that apply):

- ☐ Supervisor's research grants
 - ☐ **already secured** ☐ pending or to be applied for (not guaranteed)
- ☐ Outside government/industry funding or contracts
 - ☐ **already secured** ☐ pending or to be applied for (not guaranteed)
- ☐ Other sources (please specify and indicate whether secured or pending):

Secured: _____

Pending: _____

- ☐ Not Applicable

We acknowledge that we have read and discussed this Funding Information Sheet and its contents to the satisfaction of both the applicant and the supervisor(s):

Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Proposed Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Proposed Co-Supervisor (if applicable): _____ Date: _____

(note: many students have only one Supervisor; some have Co-Supervisors)