

Complete Title:	Graduate Policy on the Adjustment of Financial Support and Merit-Based Scholarships, Faculty of Health Sciences
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Purpose

This policy sets out the maximum reductions of financial support related to the awarding of Merit-Based Scholarships that are permissible in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS).

All full-time doctoral, and many masters', students are guaranteed minimum levels of financial support as outlined in their Offer of Admission. This financial support normally includes a stipend which is comprised of contributions from the program¹, usually funded by the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Scholarship Fund, and contributions from the supervisor, usually funded from their research grants and contracts. In many cases, this financial support also includes employment as a Teaching Assistant or as a Research Assistant in lieu of TA.

Externally funded, merit-based scholarships may be included in the package of guaranteed financial support at the time of admission, thereby offsetting contributions that may be required from the program or the supervisor. For students admitted with an award in-hand, 100% of the award may be applied toward the student's financial support. For students who receive an award after admission, it is common practice to reduce the financial support from the program and/or the supervisor. Programs may choose to reduce their support to the student so that they can redistribute the funding to other students; similarly, supervisors may

¹ For the purposes of this policy, the term "program" refers to the graduate program or the department in which the graduate program is based.

choose to reduce their support to the student and use these funds in support of their research projects.

As FHS does not impose uniform rates of reduction; each graduate program in FHS is required to establish a policy on adjustment of financial support and must provide this to their students. The program's policy must specify whether the program will reduce its contributions and whether supervisors are permitted to reduce their contributions. All programs are expected to establish policies that optimize the incentives for success and benefit students to the greatest degree feasible.

Principles

1. "Stipends" includes the sum of the program and supervisor's contributions to a student's financial support, and any other McMaster contributions that are not needs-based bursaries or employment. Reductions of stipends are permissible when a student receives a merit-based, internal or external award that is not included as part of the financial support outlined in the Offer of Admission. The calculation of maximum permitted reductions in stipends is based on the total of all such awards held.
2. Stipends may not be reduced for awards totaling less than \$5,000.
3. The maximum adjustment to stipends following an award must ensure that the student receives an increase in remuneration equal to at least 20% of the value of the award, relative to the total of stipends and awards already held. In other words, after winning, the student must be better off financially by at least 20% of the value of the award.
4. If a student activates an award in such a way that it crosses two academic years, the value of the award should be taken as the total value of the award but the maximum reduction in each year is calculated in proportion to the amount of the award received.
5. Reductions of stipend may only be applied following receipt of a merit-based scholarship awarded to the student and paid through McMaster. Receipt of any of the following must not result in a reduction of the student's stipend:
 - a. Employment, including TA employment.
 - b. Needs-based bursaries
 - c. Awards to the supervisor
 - d. Restricted, expense-specific awards, such as travel awards.
 - e. Scholarships or bursaries not paid through McMaster.