Guidelines: Graduate Dean’s Entrance Scholarship (GDES) for Entering PhD students

Revised January 2017
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Graduate Dean’s Entrance Scholarship (GDES) Guidelines

Background: The Graduate Dean’s Entrance Scholarship (GDES) replaces the previous Multi-year funding (MYF) PhD Entrance Program.

Intent: The GDES is intended to ensure outstanding SFU PhD students are provided with financial support of at least $21,000 per year for the first four years of their PhD studies. Departments have the flexibility of contributing to this funding offer using various sources.

This document details the Graduate Dean’s Entrance Scholarship guidelines and details.

1. Eligibility for Funding: The GDES is intended for outstanding incoming PhD domestic and international students. Continuation of the award is conditional on the recipient maintaining satisfactory academic progress and applying for TriCouncil and/or Trudeau Foundation (if eligible) funding annually as long as they are eligible.

Alternatively an incoming master’s student may be awarded the GDES if the academic unit is intending on recruiting them to the PhD program in the future. PhD Students will receive up to four years of funding while master’s students will receive up to two years of funding.

2. Types of GDES Recipients:
DGS staff will categorize the award type on the GA3 system when setting up the award.

a) GDES-I (Internal): a graduate program nominates an incoming PhD student for a GDES and they are not initiating a TriCouncil award.

b) GDES-E (External): a graduate program nominates an incoming PhD student for a GDES and they are initiating one of the following (or equivalent) doctoral-level TriCouncil awards: Vanier Scholarships, Doctoral Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGSD), CIHR Doctoral Research Awards, NSERC Doctoral Postgraduate Scholarships (PGSD), and SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships.

Other entering major external scholarship winners may be eligible for a GDES, please check with the Office of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Fellows.

3. Award Offer, Notification and Acceptance: GDES offers must be mentioned in the Admission Offer Letter to the student. Offers should clearly outline the conditions of the funding and/or refer students to the GDES guidelines. Here is some template wording for the admission offer letters:

Your admission offer includes the following funding commitment subject to the GDES guidelines. Note that if you receive a TriCouncil scholarship or another major external...
award your offer is subject to revision. (https://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/awards/entrance-scholarships/gdes). Your total entrance funding offer is worth $xx,xxx

Year 1: $21,000 GDES (+ any other funding you may be offering)
Year 2: $21,000 GDES (+ any other funding you may be offering)
Year 3: $21,000 GDES (+ any other funding you may be offering)
Year 4: $21,000 GDES (+ any other funding you may be offering)

4. Nomination Procedures: All incoming PhD applicants offered admission should be considered for a GDES. Nomination is done on the Graduate Awards Application and Adjudication System (GA3). See the GDES Competition Memo for further instructions.

a) Ineligible Applicants: GDES offers made to students who are not eligible for the GDES and GDES offers that exceed the number of awards allocated to the graduate program will be the responsibility of the graduate program to fund.

b) Departmental Contribution: there is no obligation of academic units to provide further funding to a GDES recipient

c) Re-offering the GDES: If a graduate program offers a GDES to an incoming student, and that student chooses not to come to SFU, the graduate program may offer the GDES to another student.

5. Award Start Dates: The start date for GDES must coincide with the start date of the recipient’s graduate program.

6. Duration of Funding: 4 years from initiation of PhD program, providing they remain in good academic standing.

Previous PhD studies
- Previous doctoral studies at another institution will be counted when assessing duration of the GDES to a maximum of 2 years if applied to current studies.
- Previous doctoral studies at another institution will not be counted if those previous doctoral studies are not applied toward the student’s SFU PhD program
- Eligibility for the GDES for students with previous SFU PhD studies is considered case-by-case by DGS, with particularly complicated/difficult cases brought to SGAAC for review.
Master’s Students

- If the academic unit does not wish to offer their GDES to an incoming PhD student they may choose to allocate it to an entering master’s student but the funding is reduced to two years of support.
- All other conditions related to internal or external scholarships apply.
- Should a master’s GDES recipient be approved for transfer to the same academic unit’s PhD program prior to the termination of their GDES funding (end of 6th term after initiating their master’s program) they will receive the remainder of the original GDES funding (up to 4 years from initiating their master’s program).

7. Program Values

Ex #1: student receives the GDES and never receives TriCouncil funding:
Years 1-4: student will receive a GDES worth $21,000 per year

Ex #2: student receives GDES and starts program with 3 year TriCouncil funding:
Years 1-3: student will receive TriCouncil + $5,000 GDES as top-up
         Year 4: student will receive a GDES worth $21,000/year

Ex #3: student receives GDES and is successful in a later TriCouncil competition:
Years 1-2: Student will receive GDES worth $21,000/year
         Years 3-4: student will receive TriCouncil + $5,000 GDES as top-up

Ex #4: student receives GDES and is successful in a Vanier (or other $50K+ award):
Student receives GDES worth $21,000/yr while not holding other funding
Student will not receive the $5,000 top-up while holding the other award because they have reached the $50K funding limit/per annum.

a) Scholarships

- Students offered both a GDES and internal scholarship funding will be required to accept the internal scholarship funding. If the value of the internal scholarship funding is greater than the value of the GDES ($21,000), the GDES will be reduced for the period when the student receives internal scholarship funding. GDES recipients will receive regular GDES funding once their internal scholarship funding ends (up to 4 years from initiation of program).
- Students offered a GDES who subsequently receive a TriCouncil or equivalent external scholarship, their GDES value is reduced to $5,000 per year while holding the external scholarship.

b) Teaching Assistantship (TA), Research Assistantship (RA), Sessional Appointment
GDES recipients may hold a TA, RA or SA while holding the GDES.
8. Requirement to Apply for Other Funding
GDES recipients are required to apply each year for external funding (ie. TriCouncil Scholarships, Trudeau Foundation, etc as long as they remain eligible). If they do not, they will forfeit their remaining GDES funding.

9. Interruption and Termination of Funding
a) Funding Overpayment: GDES recipients will be required to return any amounts issued to them for the time period after their effective completion or withdrawal date.

b) Completion of Program: The funding is prorated to the end of the month in which students complete their degree program, which is normally the date the final copy of the student’s thesis is accepted by Graduate Studies. To assist in avoiding overpayments, students are asked to advise Graduate Awards (dgsaward@sfu.ca) of their completion date in a timely manner.

c) Withdrawal from Program: Awards are prorated to the effective date of withdrawal from a degree program. To assist in avoiding overpayments, students are asked to advise Graduate Studies (dgsaward@sfu.ca) of their withdrawal date in a timely manner.

d) Leave from Program: GDES recipients are not eligible to receive funding during academic terms in which they are officially on-leave or not registered. Students are asked to advise Graduate Awards to arrange for the suspension of their award payments. The original GDES end dates will be extended by the period of leave when it is approved for exceptional circumstances, with the result that students will receive the same GDES package as they would have without the leave/interruption.

e) Transfer from doctoral to master’s program: GDES recipients who transfer from a doctoral program to a master's program (or any non-doctoral program) will have their GDES package prorated to the effective date of transfer. To assist in avoiding overpayments, students are asked to advise Graduate Awards of their intention to transfer in a timely manner.

f) Non-academic interruption: With the approval of Graduate Studies, it is possible to interrupt students' GDES payments for non-academic reasons that do not result in corresponding academic leave. An example of such a situation is when students interrupt their GDES funding for relevant work experience or to take up a MITACS Accelerate Internship, but do not take a corresponding academic leave from SFU. In these and similar circumstances, the original GDES end dates will apply.
10. **Internships:** Provided GDES recipients maintain their PhD registration they may continue to receive GDES funding during unpaid internships, provided they are a requirement of the student’s program of study. Internships that are not a requirement of the student’s program of study are discussed in Interruption and Termination of Funding above.

11. **Employment:** GDES recipients are required to limit their number of hours of employment to an average of 12 hours per week. Work as a TA, RA or SA is excluded.

12. **Allocation of GDES:** Each year, GDES will be allocated to academic units based on a combination of enrolments, TriCouncil success and completion rate. We anticipate allocating about 30 GDES per annum so most units can expect to receive from 1-2 awards.

13. **Banking GDES Awards:** Banking of these awards is not allowed.

14. **Transferring between Doctoral Programs:** With the approval of Graduate Studies, GDES recipients may transfer from one SFU PhD program to another (e.g., from Geography to REM or from Engineering to CHEM) without penalty and the original program will not be compensated with another GDES award.