**Faculty of ALES procedure for use of Transition funding and Backstop funding housed in Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) to support Minimum Guaranteed Funding (MGF) for graduate students.**

**Context:**

For reference, the following procedures and conditions operate within the framework of Minimum Guaranteed Funding (MGF) as follows:

“*On April 17, 2024, the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Council voted to endorse Minimum Guaranteed Funding of $100K CAD over four years and not less than $25K CAD in year one for current and new doctoral students beginning in Fall 2025.*”

Links to MGF background documentation:

https://www.ualberta.ca/en/graduate-studies/fees-funding/other-funding-support/minimum-guaranteed-funding-for-phd-students.html

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xxZbK6146uvwYrd3L-9MSJfcu7uNlZ52EvawJaau5NQ/edit?tab=t.0

**Principles:**

* The primary purpose of the Transition Funding and Backstop Funding (Backstop is sometimes called “emergency”) is to aid PhD students who are not receiving the minimum funding of $25K per year or $100K accumulated over four years from the beginning of their program. Access to funding is based on identified need for financial support as described below.
* i) Supervisors and departments must have exhausted all other potential funding sources for the student before requesting Transition funding or Backstop funding. ii) Supervisors must demonstrate that they are actively applying for other funding sources. If the supervisor secures any other new funding source when a student is receiving payments from Transition funding or Backstop funding, the ALES Dean’ Office must be notified immediately, and the support will be discontinued from the time when the supervisor secure new funding.
* As a good practice, it is advisable that academic supervisor evenly distribute their available funding through each year for the duration of a student’s program, although more funding can be provided to students (above minimum guaranteed funding requirements) upfront in the beginning of their programs.
* Students must be registered, full-time and in good standing to be eligible for payments of Transition funding or Backstop funding. Priority will be given to PhD students who have not reached $100K in funding over four years of starting their program.

**Procedures:**

* Focusing on the standard operating procedures, the following shall apply for ***requests of Transition Funding Support***:
	+ Supervisors of PhD students are to initiate and make the request to their Associate Chair / Director of Graduate Studies / Graduate Coordinator within their corresponding Departments by filling out the enclosed request form – see below. Supervisors need to include a rationale for the request in the form and include the rate of the last stipend paid by the supervisor to the student (date and rate: $$$$ per month or year).
	+ Students must have started their program prior to September 2024 to be eligible for transition funding and must be within four years of starting their program.
	+ Requests made by the supervisors directly to the Associate Chairs / Directors / Coordinators must include the reason for the request (e.g., increased student stipend cannot be accommodated in existing budgets due to…) and a justification for why the difference in funding shortfall cannot be paid using other funds available to the supervisor.
	+ The Graduate Associate Chair / Director / Coordinator in the Department shall consider the request, engage in any necessary discussion with the student’s supervisor and make a recommendation to the Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in ALES. Note that the MGF operates as a partnership between the academic supervisor funding in the form of stipend [e.g., Graduate Research Assistantship Funds (GRAF), graduate research assistant (GRA), or others], other funding sources such as graduate teaching assistantships (GTA) by their Department, any scholarships and awards received by the student, as well as GPS transition funds. Through Faculty allocation, Departments also have available Graduate Student Award (GSA) (formerly called recruitment scholarships) funding which can be strategically used by the Department to fulfil the MGF requirement. All funding sources are considered as contributions to meeting the MGF requirements outlined above.
	+ In making a request to the Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to access transition funding, the Graduate Associate Chair / Director / Coordinator shall also provide information on any other funding (e.g., GRAF, GRA, GTA, scholarships and awards) that is currently being received by the student. Funding amounts recommended by the Associate Chair / Director / Coordinator can only be in a minimum of $500 and in increments of $100 (e.g., $800, $1400, and not $783, $1401.92).
	+ If a given department is submitting multiple requests for funding for their students, the corresponding Graduate Associate Chair / Director / Coordinator must provide an internal ranking of their requests to inform and facilitate the adjudication and nominations at the Faculty scale.
	+ Where deem appropriate, and if aware of any specific situation, the Graduate Associate Chair / Director / Coordinator has the option to mention, in their recommendation, if a student belongs to an equity-deserving or underrepresented group and/or their social location, as this can further raise awareness and may inform equitable access within good practices of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Indigenization, Belonging and Change Considerations for community building.
	+ The ALES Dean’ Office shall review the request, conduct additional checks into the supervisor’s research finance situation as required and make a recommendation.
	+ Transition funding will be allocated on a 4-month term basis and must be applied for before July 31st for assistance in the Fall term and prior to November 30th for assistance in Winter term. For any support during the Spring and / or Summer terms, requests shall be made prior to March 31st.
	+ If the total requested funding within ALES exceeds the funds provided by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS), the Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will consult with the Associate Chairs / Directors / Coordinators in the four ALES Departments as appropriate to achieve equitable recommendations and priorities on funding.
	+ Any leaves of absence “stop the clock” in the timeframes of the MGF policy and student’s program.
	+ In graduate programs where MSc students can change category and convert degree program to become PhD students, the entire student's program becomes a PhD program. Hence, the start date of the student's program remains the same as when the student began as a MSc student in their MSc program. The start date of the program informs the timeframe for minimum guaranteed funding policy.
* If, after providing existing PhD students funds to ensure the minimum guaranteed funding, funds remain available, the following shall be the priorities to disburse them to graduate students in ALES departments in the following sequence:
	1. Backstop funds for graduate students (see Backstop guidelines below)
	2. Deploy the remaining funds to recruit new PhD students
* Requests for support for recruitment of new graduate students must be made by the Associate Chairs / Directors / Coordinator in the Department to the Associate Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies in a similar fashion as described above for existing students.
* ***Backstop Funding Support*** has the purpose of addressing unanticipated circumstances or unplanned needs. This can include, for example, when a student needs to switch programs or supervisors, or with the unanticipated loss of a research grant or contract by the academic supervisor. A demonstrated need for backstop financial assistance also includes lack of availability of scholarships (including lack of GSAs by the Department), GTA, or any research funding available to the academic supervisor, an unexpected termination of funding, or an unexpected significant delay in the student’s research beyond reasonable control by the academic supervisor and student.
* The following principles will guide the Faculty’s decisions on ***requests for Backstop Funding Support*** for existing graduate students:
	+ Priority will be given to PhD students.
	+ The student has to be within the 4-year time frame for a PhD program (as already detailed above).
	+ The date of the student’s final examination must have already been determined or will take place within six months from the date the request for backstop financial support is being sent by the Associate Chair / Director / Coordinator to the Associate Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
	+ Using the request form enclosed below, an academic supervisor can make the request for backstop funding support to the Associate Chairs / Director / Coordinator in their Departments who will examine the case as described above and make a recommendation to the Associate Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies. Requests made by the supervisors to the Associate Chairs / Directors / Coordinators must include the reason for requesting backstop funds. Along with the supervisor request and rationale, the rate of the last stipend (rate: $$$$ per month or year) previously provided by the supervisor to the student needs to be mentioned in their request form – see below. The Faculty will conduct an independent analysis of the supervisor’s research financial situation prior to making a decision regarding the request.
	+ The Associate Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies will make the decision of the nomination to GPS, in consultation with the Dean of ALES.
	+ Backstop financial assistance will be paid up to a maximum of four months at a rate not exceeding the minimum guaranteed funding for PhD students ($100K over four years).
	+ Self-funded, working professionals, sponsored students, or students receiving a GTA or scholarship(s) with combined values higher than the MGF requirements, and course-based Master’s students, are normally not eligible for backstop financial support. In the future, when minimum guaranteed funding becomes endorsed and implemented for MSc thesis students (for example: a 2-years timeframe), similar set of principles and procedures will apply.
	+ Collectively, this document is written in the spirit of equitable access to support our graduate students in need. Please note that any approved payments of transition funding or backstop funding flows from the Faculty of GPS directly to eligible graduate students nominated by the Faculty of ALES. In other words, Faculty of GPS holds the funds and makes these payments as award payments directly to the approved students. This process is also informed internally by a GPS - MGF Dashboard that lists and encompasses various data of student's funding sources.

**Transition Funding and Backstop Funding Support Request Form**

Note: by submitting this request, ALES has the right to verify the information provided.

**Section 1: Student Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Program: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Start Term and Year of Program: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Supervisor Information**

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor CCID: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Overview of previous and current funding commitments to the student:

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**Section 3: Term and Funding Request**

• Period requested for (i.e., specific months of the year, or Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer terms):

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• Funding amount requested (rounded in increments of $100): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Section 4: Exhaustion of Funding Sources**

Please explain all the steps taken to secure funding for the student from other sources (GRAF, GRA, GTA, GSA, scholarships, or awards) before requesting transition or backstop funding:

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Please detail the active efforts being made to secure future funding for the student. List grants

submitted or pending submission by the supervisor:

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**Section 6: Department Confirmation**

* The Department confirms that the student is in good academic standing, registered, and full-time as per ALES and GPS regulations.
* The Department confirms that all avenues for securing funding for this student have been exhausted within the Department.

**Section 7: Signatures (and names if not included above)**

Academic Supervisor:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department Graduate Coordinator:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chair:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_