



Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities for 2023-24 to 2026-27

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

2024

**Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted
Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27**

Table of Contents

Definitions	3
Introduction	3
Section 1: Tuition Fee Framework	4
1. A: Tuition Fee Freeze	4
1. B: Determining Ontario Residency	6
1. C: Tuition Fee Increases for Domestic Out-of-Province Students	7
1. D: Tuition Fee Increases for Approved Tuition Anomalies	10
Section 2: Application of the Tuition Fee Framework	12
2. A: Exceptions under the Tuition Fee Freeze	12
2. B: Tuition Fees for New Programs	12
Section 3: Tuition Fee Set-Aside	13
Section 4: Tuition Fee Billing	14
4. A: Tuition Deposits	14
4. B: Subsequent Payments	15
4. C: Deferral and Late Fees	17
Section 5: Program or Flat Fees	18
Section 6: Ancillary Fees	19
Section 7: Reporting and Compliance	19

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

Definitions

The following terms are used in the Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities for the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years:

Ancillary Fee: a fee imposed or administered by a given institution, or one of its constituent parts or its federated or affiliated institutions, in addition to regular tuition fees, which a student pays in exchange for, or to support, a service or product.

Enrolment: fiscal full-time equivalent enrolments eligible and claimed for Ministry of Colleges and Universities (ministry) operating grant support as defined in the Operating Funds Distribution Manual.

Universities: publicly-assisted universities and university-level institutions as defined and listed in the Operating Funds Distribution Manual.

Introduction

These Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) are intended to give direction to publicly assisted universities on implementing the tuition fee freeze for domestic Ontario students and the limited increases for domestic students from other provinces and tuition anomalies respectively, as established by the ministry. These Guidelines will be in effect for the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years.

Tuition fees for publicly funded programs continue to be regulated and are tied to the Student Access Guarantee requirements.

Unless otherwise indicated in these Guidelines, all policies in relation to tuition fees in the current university *Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual* remain in effect. In the event of a conflict between the previous policy and the *Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual*, these Guidelines will apply.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

Section 1: Tuition Fee Framework

2023-24 Academic Year

As per the March 2023 announcement, the ministry continued the tuition fee freeze for all funding-eligible programs and allowed institutions the flexibility to increase tuition fees for domestic out-of-province students by a maximum of five per cent. The ministry also introduced the tuition anomalies process where some institutions were approved to increase tuition fees up to a maximum of 7.5 per cent annually, over a multi-year period where current tuition was not aligned with the sector average across comparable programs. The approved programs are referred to as tuition anomalies.

2024-25 to 2026-27 Academic Years

As announced in February 2024, the ministry is maintaining the tuition fee freeze for the 2024-25 to 2026-27 academic years. Institutions will be able to increase tuition by up to five per cent per year for domestic out-of-province students. Some institutions will continue to be allowed to increase tuition fees up to a maximum of 7.5 per cent annually over a multi-year period up to the sector average of comparable programs approved through the tuition anomalies process.

Tuition Freeze and Flexibility to Increase Tuition Fee for Out-Of-Province Students

Tuition fees for domestic Ontario residents will remain frozen at the 2022-23 levels in the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years. Institutions have the flexibility to increase tuition fees for domestic out-of-province students by five per cent per year from the previous year's rate in the 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2026-27 academic years.

1. A: Tuition Fee Freeze

For the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years there is a tuition fee freeze in place for domestic Ontario students. During these academic years, tuition fees for all publicly

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

funded programs approved by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities must remain the same as the tuition fee levels reported in previous academic year – except tuition fees for domestic out-of-province students and approved tuition anomalies. This means:

- Institutions are expected to charge the same full-time and part-time tuition fees that were charged in 2022-23 for all domestic Ontario students in all ministry-approved funding eligible programs and for all years of study from 2023-24 to 2026-27. Domestic Ontario students in programs eligible for operating funding must not experience any tuition fee increases.
- Students enrolling in the first year of a program in 2023-24 to 2026-27 are to pay the same tuition as students enrolled in first year of the program in 2022-23.
- Similarly, students in upper years of study in 2023-24 to 2026-27 are to pay the same tuition fees as students in the same program and the same year of study paid in 2022-23.
- Similar to the provisions of the previous Tuition Fee Framework, the tuition fee freeze applies to all domestic Ontario students by year of study for all eligible programs and not by cohort in all academic years until 2026-27.
- Programs subject to this framework will remain the same as those regulated under the previous frameworks and provisions.
 - This framework applies to tuition fees for programs which are eligible for ministry operating funding and have been approved by the ministry to be funding eligible.
 - Tuition fees for programs that are ineligible for operating funding, such as full-cost-recovery or self-funded programs, are excluded from this framework.
 - This framework does not apply to tuition fees for funding-ineligible students such as international students.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

- Approved programs through the tuition anomalies process are excluded from the Tuition Fee Framework provisions.

1. B: Determining Ontario Residency

Institutions shall determine whether a student is an Ontario resident based on the residency requirement used in determining eligibility for Ontario student loans and grants under the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) set out in section 6 of O. Reg. 70/17 (Ontario Student Grants and Ontario Student Loans) made under the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act*.

To be considered a domestic Ontario student for the purposes of this Tuition Fee Framework, the student must be a domestic student, meaning a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident within the meaning of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada) or a protected person within the meaning of subsection 95 (2) of that Act¹. In addition, on or before the day they start their year of study for the program they are or will be enrolled in, the following requirements must be met:

- The student or one of their expected contributors must:
 - have resided in Ontario for a period of at least 12 consecutive months; and
 - have not resided in another province or territory in Canada for a period of 12 or more consecutive months since completing the 12-month period of residency in Ontario required above.
- If neither the student nor any of their expected contributors have resided in Ontario or any other province or territory in Canada for a period of 12 or more consecutive months, the student must:
 - be residing in Ontario and attending an approved institution in Ontario on a full-time basis; or

¹ For further details on student eligibility, please refer to the Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

- have previously received a grant or student loan under the Act ².

An expected contributor may be one or more of the following individuals who contributes toward the education costs of the student for a period of study:

1. the student's parents or step-parents;
2. an individual who is the student's sponsor within the meaning of the regulations made under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada);
3. the individual who, on the first day of the period of study, is the student's spouse.

In determining whether a student or their expected contributor has resided in Ontario or another Canadian province or territory for a period of 12 consecutive months, the time that the individual or spouse spent in full-time studies at a post-secondary institution shall not be included.

The residency requirement used in determining eligibility for OSAP set out in section 6 of O. Reg. 70/17, as amended from time to time, is the governing authority for the purposes of determining Ontario residency for the purposes of this Tuition Fee Framework and the ministry expects publicly funded universities to be aware of any amendments that may be made to the relevant provisions when determining a student's residency status.

1. C: Tuition Fee Increases for Domestic Out-of-Province Students

During the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years, institutions can increase tuition fees for domestic out-of-province students by a maximum of five per cent per year.

Institutions shall determine whether a student is an Ontario resident based on the definition used in determining eligibility for Ontario student loans and grants under the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) set out in section 6 of O. Reg. 70/17 (Ontario

² Please refer to residency requirement used in determining eligibility for OSAP as set out in section 6 of O. Reg. 70/17.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

Student Grants and Ontario Student Loans) made under the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act*.

The tuition fees are to be increased by year of study and not by cohort.

For the purposes of this Tuition Fee Framework, an out-of-province student is defined in the same manner used to determine eligibility for OSAP's Ontario student loans and grants. OSAP requirements indicate that, to be eligible for in-province tuition, students (or at least one of their expected contributors) must:

- be a domestic student, meaning a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident within the meaning of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada) or a protected person within the meaning of subsection 95 (2) of that Act³; and
- meet the Ontario residency requirement described in section 6 of Ontario Regulation 70/17.
 - As of the first day of their study period, Ontario must be the most recent province in which the student resided for 12 consecutive months, not including time as a full-time postsecondary student.
 - Students who do not meet Ontario residency criteria based on their own status in Ontario, may be considered a resident of Ontario under other circumstances.⁴

Any student demonstrating eligibility to pay domestic fees at Ontario's publicly-assisted universities but who is unable to demonstrate Ontario residency is considered an out-of-province student.

³ For further details please refer to the definition for eligible domestic students provided in the Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual.

⁴ The description of the residency requirement in this section is provided for reference only. Section 6 of Ontario Regulation 70/17 determines the residency requirement. Subsection 6(3) of the regulation also applies.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

A student who permanently moves their residence to Ontario must meet residency requirements and reside in Ontario for 12 consecutive months - without being in full-time postsecondary studies - to be considered an Ontario resident for the purposes of OSAP and tuition fees.

Out-of-province students are identified using the same standards and definitions as per OSAP applications outlined in O. Reg. 70/17: *Ontario Student Grants and Ontario Student Loans*, Section 6.

In determining whether an individual or their expected contributor has resided in Ontario or another Canadian province or territory for a period of 12 consecutive months, for the purposes of the residency requirement, the time that the individual or spouse spent in full-time studies at a post-secondary institution shall not be included.

An expected contributor may be one or more of the following individuals who contributes toward the education costs of the student for a period of study:

4. the student's parents or step-parents;
5. an individual who is the student's sponsor within the meaning of the regulations made under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada);
6. the individual who, on the first day of the period of study, is the student's spouse.

The description of the residency requirement above is a summary of the applicable regulatory provisions for ease of reference only. The residency requirement in the regulation, as amended from time to time, is the governing document ⁵.

⁵ Please refer to residency requirement used in determining eligibility for OSAP as set out in section 6 of O. Reg. 70/17.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

1. D: Tuition Fee Increases for Approved Tuition Anomalies

For the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years, under the tuition anomalies provisions and as per the ministry's approval previously communicated, institutions are allowed to apply permissible adjustments for eligible approved programs in the form of tuition fee increases to be applied over a multi-year timeframe, notwithstanding the generally applicable tuition fee freeze.

Ministry's approval has been given to institutions by the ministry for certain select programs with tuition fees that were considered to be lower than the sector average for comparable programs.

The ministry has forwarded memos to all institutions that submitted an application, indicating whether the tuition anomaly adjustment was approved and providing instructions regarding allowable adjustment to tuition fees over the upcoming years. The permissible rate of tuition adjustment for programs that received approval from the ministry under the tuition anomaly provisions cannot exceed 7.5 per cent in a given academic year.

Approved tuition fee anomaly adjustments are only applicable to new first-year students that started their program in 2023-24. Students that were in these programs prior to the anomaly adjustment (existing students in 2023-24) are considered exempt from the adjustments and should not be impacted by tuition fee increases until they have completed their programs. Existing students in these programs are subject to the provisions of the Tuition Fee Framework and the tuition fee freeze that is in place in the 2023-24 to 2026-27 academic years.

For additional information, please refer to the institution-specific memo from the Honourable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities, which was previously sent to individual universities. This memo detailed the results of the tuition anomalies process and the allowable rate of tuition fee increase specific to each program. Please contact the ministry if you need a copy of the memo previously forwarded to your institution.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

As noted in section 1C: Tuition Fee Increases for Domestic Out-of-Province Students, until 2026-27, institutions have the flexibility to increase tuition fees for domestic out-of-province students by five per cent compared to previous year. However, institutions can only apply one type of tuition fee increase to approved programs under the tuition fee anomalies provisions.

Until 2026-27, institutions cannot apply the ministry-approved tuition fee anomalies adjustment and the out-of-province increase to the same program for new first year domestic out-of-province students in the same academic year. Only one rate of tuition fee increase can be applied to an approved program under the tuition anomalies initiative, in the same academic year.

Section 2: Application of the Tuition Fee Framework

2. A: Exceptions under the Tuition Fee Freeze

Similar to previous years, the Tuition Fee freeze will not apply to programs or to categories of student that are not eligible for operating grant funding. This includes full-cost-recovery or self-funded programs that are excluded from the provisions of the Tuition Fee Framework. In addition, international students who are ineligible to be counted for operating grant funding are excluded from the provisions of the Tuition Fee Framework.

A university may not convert an existing publicly funded program to a full-cost-recovery program without prior approval from the ministry.

2. B: Tuition Fees for New Programs

A university may set tuition fees for new programs up to a level commensurate with the tuition charged for comparable university programs in Ontario. Tuition fees should not exceed the maximum fee rates charged by other comparable university programs across the province.

For new programs which require the approval of the ministry of Colleges and Universities, the ministry will review tuition fees for comparable programs and work with universities to establish an appropriate initial tuition fee.

Once tuition fee for the first year of a new program has been approved, the new program and tuition fee will be subject to the provisions of the Tuition Fee Framework.

Section 3: Tuition Fee Set-Aside

The tuition fee set-aside fund is in addition to the OSAP and other institutional funds, which currently provide students with financial assistance.

It is expected that institutions will continue to partner with the ministry to support access to postsecondary education and provide financial assistance to students with financial need through the continuation of the Student Access Guarantee.

To ensure institutions have sufficient funds to meet their Student Access Guarantee obligations and to provide other forms of assistance to students in need, the ministry is continuing tuition fee set-aside requirements. Universities are responsible for expending the tuition fee set-aside amount annually to provide financial support to students through bursaries, scholarships, and work-study programs or work between academic terms. The ministry will monitor the tuition fee set-aside disbursement by requiring universities to submit annual report on the disbursement of tuition set-aside funds.

For additional details on tuition fee set-aside, please refer to the *Tuition Fee Set-Aside Expenditure Guidelines* issued by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

Section 4: Tuition Fee Billing

While the requirements listed in Section 4 are intended to apply to programs or student categories that are eligible for operating grant funding, universities are also asked to consider applying the policies to programs or student categories that are ineligible for operating grant funding (e.g., international students) where feasible.

4. A: Tuition Deposits

A tuition deposit refers to an amount that is paid as part of the student's total tuition fees for the academic year to secure a student's enrolment at a university. Universities may require a tuition deposit from students before the start of their study term for the academic year, in accordance with the following:

- The tuition deposit shall reduce the amount of tuition owed by the student and shall not be an additional fee over and above the course/program fees for the academic year.
- The maximum tuition deposit that a university can require is 10 per cent of the student's total tuition fees for the academic year or \$500, whichever is greater.
- The tuition deposit may be non-refundable, to a maximum amount of \$500.
 - Universities shall make accommodations and refund deposits to students who withdraw for reasonable circumstances (e.g., parental or medical leave).
- Universities may require the tuition deposit no sooner than three (3) months prior to the first day of the month of student's study period start date (e.g., a tuition deposit can be required to be paid June 1st for study periods that begin anytime in September).
 - Information regarding collection of tuition deposits must also display available options for students who are unable to make a deposit payment.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

- For students enrolled in consecutive terms of study, the tuition deposit can be charged once only during the academic year.
 - A tuition deposit may be charged more than once per academic year for students who take a term off from their studies. For example, a student studying in the Fall term who is not enrolled for the Winter term, but returns in the Spring/Summer term, may be charged a tuition deposit for the Fall term as well as the Spring/Summer term.
 - Students who take a term off from their studies for education-related reasons such as a co-op/work term shall not be charged an additional tuition deposit upon return to the in-class component of their studies.
 - A tuition deposit can be charged each time a student elects to switch his/her program of study during the academic year.

4. B: Subsequent Payments

A subsequent payment is an amount that is paid after the initial tuition deposit as part of the student's total fees, to reduce the amount of fees owing for the academic year.

Subject to the subsequent payments below, universities shall provide all students with the option of per-term billing. Universities may do this for all students or can require students to opt-in to the per-term billing process. For clarity, per-term billing refers to dividing the total tuition fees for the academic year by the number of academic terms that the student is scheduled to participate in for the academic year and requiring a subsequent payment each term as per below.

In the case of programs for which universities do not utilize academic terms, the total tuition fees shall be divided as follows:

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

Total study period length	Minimum number of payments expected for per-term billing
Less than 21 weeks	1
21 to 40 weeks	2
More than 40 weeks	3

Universities may charge subsequent payments in accordance with the following:

1. Students without an Entitlement from the OSAP One Month Prior to Study Period Start⁶

- These students shall not have their subsequent payment(s) due sooner than:
 - Mid-November for the winter term;
 - One month prior to the start date of the respective term for all other terms;
 - For example, a student who commences three terms of study in the Fall may pay the first payment in August for the Fall/September start; the second payment in November for the Winter/January term; and the remaining payment in April for the Spring/Summer/May term.

2. Students with an Entitlement from OSAP One Month Prior to Study Period Start

- These students shall not have their subsequent payment(s) due sooner than the start date of the respective term.
- Universities shall automatically administer per-term billing.

⁶ For the purpose of these guidelines, an entitlement is an amount greater than zero of student loans or grants that a student qualifies for through OSAP. The ministry notifies institutions of students' entitlements through the daily year-to-date file.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

- Universities may not charge a fee for this later payment date or for providing this service to students.
- Universities may wish to extend this option to students entitled to financial assistance through other programs (either from Ontario, the federal government or other jurisdictions).

4. C: Deferral and Late Fees

Universities may not charge a fee for the administration of tuition deposits or subsequent billings.

Deferral and/or late fees refer to both lump-sum and percentage-based fees that are charged over and above a student's tuition fees if a student does not pay tuition and/or ancillary fees before payment deadlines.

The 2012-13 moratorium on increases to, or the introduction of, deferral fees have not been in effect since the 2014-15 academic year. For clarity, the use of deferral and/or late fees must be compliant with the provisions in these guidelines.

While bearing in mind the need to ensure timeliness of tuition fee payments, deferral and/or late fees shall be reasonable and transparent to students. The ministry will be monitoring the reasonableness of these fees.

Universities may also continue to use non-financial methods to encourage students to pay their outstanding tuition balances.

Section 5: Program or Flat Fees

Program or flat fees refer to a tuition fee structure in which all students in the same program are charged the same tuition fee for course loads at or above a certain threshold of the normal course load. A normal course load is defined as that which would be required for a student to earn a given credential in a prescribed amount of time (for instance: five courses per term to complete an honours bachelor's degree in four years).

In 2012-13, the ministry placed a moratorium on the introduction of new program/flat fees as well as changes to the existing program/flat fee structures. After consultations with institutions and student groups, the ministry updated the program/flat fee policy.

For universities that charge tuition on a program/flat fee basis, the updated policy set a threshold of a minimum of 80 per cent of a normal course load to charge program/flat fees. After a phasing in period in 2014-15 and 2015-16, this policy took full effect in the 2016-17 academic year with implementation of a minimum threshold of 80 per cent of a normal course load.

Universities charging program fees for cohort-based programs that require participation in a full course load may continue to charge such fees. Examples include medicine and engineering programs. For programs that have tuition fees charged on a program/flat fee basis, students taking courses above the threshold of a normal course load may not be charged for the additional courses.

Universities are required to have policies in place, and publicize these policies, for students with permanent, documented disabilities who require a reduced course load as a learning accommodation, such that these students are exempted from paying tuition fees on a program/flat fee basis. The ministry recognizes that minor differences in per-credit fees across universities reflect variability in program delivery costs and these differences will continue to exist under this updated policy.

Tuition Fee Framework Implementation Guidelines for Publicly Assisted Universities 2023-24 to 2026-27

The moratorium placed in 2012-13 on the introduction of new program/flat fees is maintained for the duration of this framework. Tuition fee levels within the program/flat fee structure may increase or decrease as per the rate specified under the Tuition Fee Framework.

Section 6: Ancillary Fees

Ancillary fees are not covered by the tuition fee policy. The ancillary fee policy outlined in the Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual remains in place. The protocol process for introducing new or increasing current ancillary fees will continue. For those ancillary fees exempt from the protocol process, it is the ministry's expectation that institutions will limit fee increases to reflect the reasonable cost of providing service to students.

Section 7: Reporting and Compliance

Each university is required to report their annual tuition fees by program to the ministry. As part of this report, university Executive Heads are required to sign-off on the report confirming that the tuition policy has been correctly implemented, including confirmation that the university is compliant with the Tuition Fee Framework and any approved tuition fee anomalies adjustments. Any university that does not comply with the requirements specified in this framework may be required to reimburse students for any excess of non-compliant fees charged. If students cannot be reimbursed, the ministry will work with institutions on facilitating corrective action and will have the option of reducing the institution's operating grants. The ministry will provide details regarding tuition compliance reporting requirements and templates through memorandums sent to universities.