

FOR APPROVAL

PUBLIC

OPEN SESSION

TO: University Affairs Board

SPONSOR: Professor Sandy Welsh, Vice-Provost, Students
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PRESENTER: See Sponsor

DATE: May 24, 2023 for May 31, 2023

AGENDA ITEM: 3

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Student Societies: Requests for Fee Increases – St. George and University-Wide

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Section 5 of the University Affairs Board *Terms of Reference* lists student societies and compulsory non-academic incidental fees among the Board's areas of responsibility.

Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 provide that compulsory non-academic incidental fee for representative student committees and divisional student societies "are approved by the Board".

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. University Affairs Board [For Approval] (May 31, 2023)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

Requests for changes to existing fees and/or the establishment of new fees are brought forward to the University Affairs Board on one or more occasions each year. This is the second set of requests on behalf of St. George and University-wide student societies to be brought forward this year.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The following student society has requested a change to fees charged on their behalf by the University:

University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union

Additional information is provided in the attached memorandum from Melinda Scott, Executive Director, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students.

The request was reviewed by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students in light of the requirements of the *Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees* and found to be in compliance.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

There are no direct financial implications for the University's operating budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be it Resolved,

THAT, beginning in the Fall 2023 session, the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union fee be modified as follows:

- (a) an increase of \$0.90 per fall session and \$0.91 per winter session in the Bikechain portion of the fee (\$0.45 per session for part-time students; based on the 2022-23 fee amounts).

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

Student Societies: Requests for Fee Increases – St. George and University-Wide



To: Members of the University Affairs Board

From: Melinda Scott, Executive Director, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students

Date: May 17, 2023

Re: Student Societies: Requests for Fee Increases – St. George and University-Wide

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Students (OVPS) has received a fee change request from a student society. The application has been reviewed in light of the requirements of the *Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees*, is found to be in compliance with these requirements, and is recommended for approval.

Requests for fee increases from student societies must meet a number of requirements. Section B.4. of the *Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees* outlines the University's general expectations:

Requests to change the fee collected on behalf of a student society and requests for new fees shall be approved only when evidence has been presented that the request has been authorized by due constitutional process in the organization. The procedures to request approval of a new fee or an increase to an existing fee shall be published in the Handbook for Student Societies.

Cost-of-Living Increases

(a) Where the amount of an increase in the fee charged is not greater than the year-over-year change in consumer prices for Ontario as measured by Statistics Canada (December-over-December) as of December 31 of the previous year, the request must be supported by the results of a previous referendum approving the principle of a cost-of-living adjustment. In special circumstances (e.g., when a portion of a student society fee is designated for a health plan or capital project), other inflation indexes or predetermined inflation factors may be used, provided that the request is supported by the results of a previous referendum approving the use of the specific inflation index or predetermined inflation factor.

Referendum Requirement

(b) Where the amount of an increase in the fee charged is greater than the year-over-year change in consumer prices, the request must be supported by the majority of the society's members voting in a recent referendum.

The procedures for handling fee change requests (from the *Handbook for Student Societies* published by the OVPS) also provide that requests for a fee increase must be supplied with the following:

Evidence that the request to change the existing fee (or to institute a new charge) has been authorized by due constitutional process of the organization. This evidence should include a copy

of or specific reference to the section of the society's constitution which related to the mechanism for fee changes, minutes of the meeting at which the resolution to request the change was passed, details and results of any referenda related to the subject which may have been held within the division, and publicity given the matter to ensure that those who may be affected by the change are aware of the proposal, including size and purpose of the increase, and have had the opportunity to make their views known.

Normally, the administration intersects with these processes at two points. Initially, student societies may seek advice from the OVPS on the wording of the referendum questions (with respect to clarity and technical language). The second point occurs after the referendum when the student society makes the formal request for a fee increase. The recommendation for approval is derived from the assessment of whether or not the society has met the requirements established in the *Policy* and relevant procedures.

Occasionally, the OVPS is asked to look into complaints about referendum procedures and compliance with relevant portions of the society's constitution and/or by-laws. The results of these investigations play a significant role in the assessment of the request and the recommendation for approval.

The assessment of requests for fee increases is normally based upon the following expectations:

1. The student society must make the request in a manner consistent with the *Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees* and the University's procedures for increases to student society fees;
2. When required, there must be a positive result in a referendum for a fee increase (special conditions established by the society's by-laws, such as quorum, must also be met);
3. The referendum question itself should be clear and provide enough information to students in order to gain a full understanding of the implications of the question and proposed fee for them;
4. The referendum must be held in a fair manner, advertised and promoted in a reasonable manner, and the members of each organization should be given a reasonable opportunity to vote; and
5. Each organization must comply with the provisions of its own by-laws, rules of procedure, and specific policies and procedures approved by the society's board or council.

Societies which have previously received approval (by referendum) from their members for an annual cost-of-living increase in the society's portion of the fee may request increases, upon approval by the society's board or council, of up to the previous Ontario December-over-December cost-of-living increase (consumer price index) calculated by Statistics Canada. The December 2021 consumer price index for Ontario was 6%.

As outlined in the excerpt from the *Policy* above, where members of a society have given consent (through a previous referendum) to the concept of inflationary increases according to a specific inflation factor or measure, this inflation factor may be used. For example, the Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students (APUS), the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (UTGSU), and the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) may request increases in the designated portions of their fees for health and dental plans at a rate established by approval of a previous referendum. APUS and the UTSU may request increases in their health and dental plan fees of up to 10%. The UTGSU may request increases in its health and dental plan fees of an amount less than or equal to a health industry index.

It is important to note that when dealing with a student society request for a fee change, it is the society's own constitution, by-laws, or established policies that set the standards for acceptable results in referenda. In some cases, society constitutions establish a minimum voter turnout in order to consider a

referendum result to be valid. The University has not established additional criteria with respect to valid referendum voter turnout.

In addition, with respect to both requests for increases based upon the results of a referendum and increases which require only the approval of the society's board or council, the administration relies on the assurances of student societies that due constitutional processes and fair procedures have been followed.

University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (UTGSU)

Background

In Fall/Winter 2022-23, the UTGSU fee was \$387.20 per fall session and \$387.16 per winter session, charged to all full-time graduate students on all campuses (\$361.46 per fall session and \$361.43 per winter session for part-time students). The fee included \$0.60 per fall session and \$0.59 per winter session for the Bikechain portion of the fee (\$0.30 per session for part-time students).

Request

1. An increase in the Bikechain portion of the fee.

A referendum was held from April 18, 2023 to April 21, 2023, in which graduate students on all campuses were asked to support an increase in the dedicated Bikechain portion of the UTGSU fee. The wording of the question was as follows:

Preamble

Bikechain is a community bike shop serving U of T students located in the Student Commons building. We serve as a hub for cycling activity on campus by providing free bicycle lending for U of T students, educational Do-It-Yourself (DIY) repair services and affordable drop-off bicycle repairs. We also run organized group rides and offer volunteer and employment opportunities for students.

Bikechain currently collects a refundable levy fee of \$0.60 per session for full-time graduate students and \$0.30 per session for part-time graduate students, indexed annually to cost of living. The proposed increase is \$0.90 per session for full-time students and \$0.45 per semester for part-time students.

If the increase is approved, the total fee would be \$1.50 for full time students and \$0.75 for part time students and would be charged to all graduate students beginning in the fall 2023 semester.

An increase in our funding would allow us to offer more educational and social programming for students, as well as to improve wages and service provision for our core programs.

Question

Do you support a levy increase to \$1.50 per session for full-time graduate students and \$0.75 per session for part time students, indexed annually to cost of living?

Yes / No / Abstain

The results of the referendum were as follows:

Yes:	720 (63.3%)	Eligible Voters (approx.):	20,018
No:	218 (19.2%)	Voter Turnout (approx.):	1,137 (5.7%)
Abstain/Spoiled:	199 (17.5%)		
Total:	1,137		

In the course of considering this request, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students has not received any complaints.

Recommendation

THAT, beginning in the Fall 2023 session, the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union fee be modified as follows:

- (a) an increase of \$0.90 per fall session and \$0.91 per winter session in the Bikechain portion of the fee (\$0.45 per session for part-time students; based on the 2022-23 fee amounts).

If approved, the total fall/winter UTGSU fee will be up to \$439.33 per fall session and up to \$439.30 per winter session, charged to all full-time graduate students on all campuses (up to \$412.32 per fall session and up to \$412.29 per winter session for part-time students).

Summary of Changes

University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union	Summer 2023		Fall 2023		Winter 2024		Summer 2022		Fall 2022		Winter 2023	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Society (cost-of-living increases up to CPI with a maximum of 5% permitted without referendum)		34.01	35.71	17.86	35.70	17.85		32.33	34.01	17.01	34.00	17.00
Health Plan (including sales tax; increases up to health industry index permitted without referendum; refundable)			255.62	255.62	255.62	255.62			218.76	218.76	218.76	218.76
Dental Plan (including sales tax; increases up to dental industry index permitted without referendum; refundable)			129.68	129.68	129.67	129.67			116.92	116.92	116.92	116.92
Bikechain (cost-of-living increases permitted without referendum; refundable)		0.30	1.50	0.75	1.50	0.75		0.29	0.60	0.30	0.59	0.30
Canadian Federation of Students (Canadian CPI cost-of-living increases permitted without referendum)		9.09	9.67	4.84	9.66	4.83		8.79	9.09	4.55	9.09	4.54
Centre for Social Justice - OPIRG (cost-of-living increases permitted without referendum; refundable)		2.98	3.16	1.58	3.15	1.58		2.83	2.98	1.49	2.97	1.49
Downtown Legal Services (refundable)		1.50	1.50	0.75	1.50	0.75		1.50	1.50	0.75	1.50	0.75
Environmental Resource Network (refundable)			0.25	0.13	0.25	0.13			0.25	0.13	0.25	0.13
Sexual Education Centre (cost-of-living increases permitted without referendum)			0.62	0.31	0.62	0.31			0.59	0.30	0.58	0.29
Students for Barrier-Free Access			2.00	1.00	2.00	1.00			2.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Women's Centre (refundable)		0.50	0.50	0.25	0.50	0.25		0.50	0.50	0.25	0.50	0.25
TOTAL		\$48.38	\$440.21	\$412.77	\$440.17	\$412.74		\$46.24	\$387.20	\$343.11	\$367.72	\$343.07
Change from Previous Year		+4.6% \$2.14	+13.7% \$53.01	+14.2% \$51.31	+13.7% \$53.01	+14.2% \$51.31		+0.7% \$0.32	+5.3% \$19.45	+5.3% \$18.35	+5.3% \$19.44	+5.4% \$18.36