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Navigating Canadian Student Loans

Navigating Government Student Aid:
Canadian Student Grant & Loan Programs

A Guide for StFX Students



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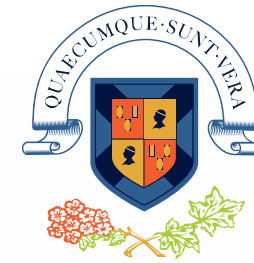
Government Student Aid

Government student grants and loans often make up a substantial portion of a student's financial plan to attend university. In Canada, approximately half of the student population at the undergraduate level accesses this funding to help manage the costs of their post-secondary education.

Before you arrive at StFX, you should determine if student loans are a resource you will need to access and if yes, apply during the spring or summer prior to starting your studies.

It is important to have a budget for university and the sooner you apply for government student aid, the sooner you will be able to update the resources section of your budget and be as prepared as you can for September!

Basic Eligibility:



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Students who hold Canadian citizenship, permanent residency, or refugee status in Canada are eligible to apply for government student aid funding to support studies at recognized institutions in approved programs.

St. Francis Xavier University is a recognized institution within all of the Canadian governmental student loan programs.

Eligibility to apply does not guarantee funding eligibility. This guide will help you to understand how the Canadian government student aid programs work, how and when you may apply, the programs you have access to based on where you live and next steps if you are approved for funding.



Understanding Federal, Provincial and Territorial Programs in Canada:



Each of the provinces and territories in Canada operates their own financial aid program. In addition to this, Federal Student Grants and Loans are available in most Canadian provinces and one territory.



Canadian students apply to the program in their **home** province or territory, and are assessed for both provincial/territorial and federal funding through the one application as applicable.



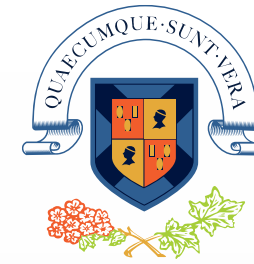
Do you know the difference between a grant and a loan?

Grants: are available to students from low-and middle-income families who are enrolled in an eligible part-time or full-time undergraduate program; a grant is funding you receive to use towards your school costs that **you do not have to pay back to the aid program.**

Loans: are available to students who are enrolled in an eligible part-time or full-time undergraduate program; a loan is funding you receive to use towards your school costs and is **repayable at the end of your studies** (ideally your studies will end successfully with graduation).

Determining where to apply:

In Canada, students apply to the governmental student aid program in their **home** province or territory.



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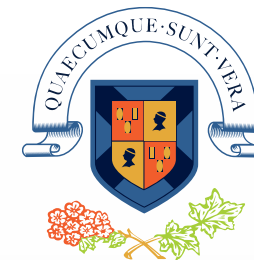
What does **home** mean?

Home is defined as the last province or territory where you lived as a non-post-secondary student for at least 12 consecutive months.

For most undergraduate students, this is usually the province or territory where you completed grade 12 and graduated high school.

Even if you are attending school outside of your home province or territory – i.e. you are moving to Nova Scotia to attend StFX – you still apply to your home province or territory's program, not Nova Scotia's.

If you have recently moved or newly arrived in Canada and are not sure what your home program would be, please contact the StFX Financial Aid Office for help determining this.



How does the program work in your home province or territory?

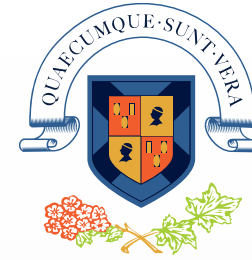
In British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario the Government of Canada and the provinces work together to provide integrated student grants and loans.

In Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, Canada Student Grants and Loans are available alongside provincial student aid.

In Yukon, only Canada Student Grants and Loans and territorial grants are available.

In the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Quebec, Canada Student Grants and Loans are not available, as these governments operate their own student aid programs.

Determining how to apply: Part-Time or Full-Time studies?



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Part-Time Studies

Students studying in a part-time capacity apply to the part time funding program offered by their province or territory.

You are in part time studies if you are enrolled in less than a 60% course load (equivalent to 9 credits/term at StFX) in all of the programs except Newfoundland and Labrador's.

In Newfoundland and Labrador's program, you are deemed a part-time student if your course load is less than 80% (12 credits/term).

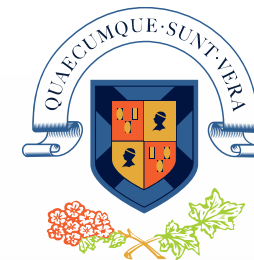
Costs that are considered for funding in the part time programs are tuition, mandatory fees, books and materials, and in some circumstances travel and childcare costs.

Full-Time Studies

Students studying in a full-time capacity apply to the full-time funding program offered by their province or territory.

You are in full-time studies if you are enrolled in at least a 60% course load (equivalent to 9 credits/term at StFX) or 80% (12 credits/term) for Newfoundland and Labrador's program.

Costs that are considered for funding in the full-time programs include tuition, mandatory fees, books and materials, travel, childcare costs, and living costs (i.e. room and board).



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An Important Option: Funding for Students with Disabilities

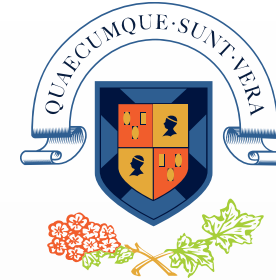
Students with a recognized permanent, persistent, or prolonged disability who enroll in a 40-59% course load (40-79% for Newfoundland and Labrador's program) may choose to participate in either the part-time or full-time program.

Medical verification of your disability will be required by the government aid program. This will require a medical certificate, a psycho-educational assessment, or documents that prove you have received federal or provincial permanent, persistent, or prolonged disability assistance.

You may qualify for a Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities* of up to \$2800 in each year of study, as well as a services and equipment grant* to assist you in your studies.

*Note: these grant are is not available to students from the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, or Quebec.

Determining how to apply: Dependent or Independent Status?



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Dependent Student Status

Students attending university directly from high school apply as a dependent student to the aid programs.

This means that within the application, you will be asked about your parental income, and this will be used in your needs assessment.

Note: parental income is not the only assessment factor and there is no automatic income cut off level that will disqualify you from funding.

You cannot know without actually applying and being assessed if you will qualify for financial aid.

Note: if you plan to apply to the StFX in course bursary program in September, proof of approval or denial of student loan funding is required to be considered for bursary awards.

Independent Student Status

Students who have been out of high school for at least 4 years or had a break within post-secondary studies of at least 2 years apply as an independent student to the aid programs.

This means that within the application, you will only be asked for your own income information and parental income will not be taken into consideration in your needs assessment.

There is one important exception to this: in the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), students must have been out of high school for at least 6 years before they will be considered independent for the purposes of provincial grant and loan funding.

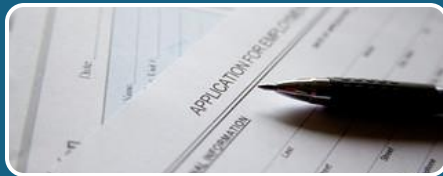
Ready, Set, Apply!



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Most provinces and territories use an online application for their full-time student aid programs.



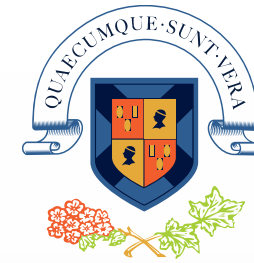
All programs, except Ontario's and British Columbia's, use a paper-based application for their part-time student aid programs. Ontario's and British Columbia's part-time application is available online.



To start the application process, navigate to your home program's website and review the information that you find there about how to apply, and details of how specifically the program works.

Note: Because there are so many different programs and no two are exactly alike, it is not possible to detail every aspect of the governmental programs in this guide. The next few slides will focus on the basic application and follow-up processes that are common to all Canadian programs.

Application



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Full-Time Funding

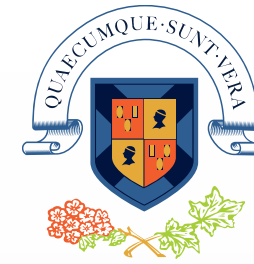
The first step to applying in most of the programs is to create an online account with your home program. This will require your Social Insurance Number.

Once you are logged into your account, you will complete your program's full-time funding application and submit it online for assessment.

Depending upon the program, you may have to complete the application in one sitting, or you may be able to save your progress and return to complete it later.

Be prepared – to complete the application you will need your income tax assessment information from the previous tax year (if you filed) as well as your parent(s)'s if you are applying as a dependent student.

Application



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Part-Time Funding

For all of the programs except Ontario's, this requires a paper-based application that you will access from your program's website.

You complete Sections A-C of the application and then submit it to the StFX Financial Aid Office to have Section D completed. You can do this in person, by fax (902-867-5458) or by email (financialaid@stfx.ca).

The completed application will be returned to you, and it is your responsibility to submit it, with the required supporting documentation, to your loan program for assessment.

You must be enrolled in the course(s) you are seeking funding for before Section E can be completed; it cannot be completed for courses you intend to take but have not yet registered in.



Application

Note for students from Ontario: You will be required on your application to indicate the post-secondary institution you are attending. **StFX is recognized as an approved institution within all the Canadian aid programs, including OSAP.**

If you are applying to OSAP for part- or full-time funding, do not submit an OSAP Request for Institution/Program Approval to the StFX Financial Aid Office, it is not needed.

1 School & program
Go to:
School

2 About you
Incomplete

3 About your family
Incomplete

4 Submit
Incomplete

osap 2025-26 Full-time application

Step 1: School search

Select your school:

Select school School not on list? Clear school

Exit Save Next

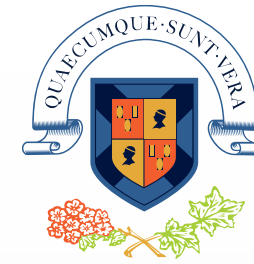
Follow these steps to choose StFX on your application:

Step 1: The drop-down list that is provided will only list educational institutions within Ontario. Beside this, there is an option to indicate that your school is not on the list.

Step 2: When you do this, a search box will appear, enter the words 'Francis Xavier' and click on the Next button.

Step 3: This will return a list of search results, select St. Francis Xavier University from the results and continue with the application.

Assessment



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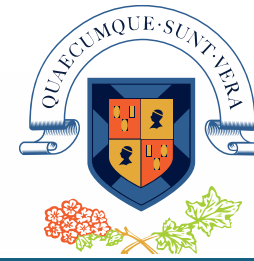
Depending upon the program, you will either receive a funding assessment through your online account or in the mail.

Some programs will have all the information they require from your application to be able to provide you with an unverified assessment immediately, others will require addition information from you or StFX before this can be done.

Carefully read the instructions the program gives you during the assessment stage. Some programs will automatically send StFX forms to be completed to support your application, others require you to submit the form to StFX and request it be completed.

For example, if you have applied in Ontario, OSAP will send StFX a Program Information Form to be completed electronically. If you apply to Newfoundland and Labrador's program, it is your responsibility to submit a Program Cost Form with the student section completed to the StFX Financial Aid Office for processing.

Assessment

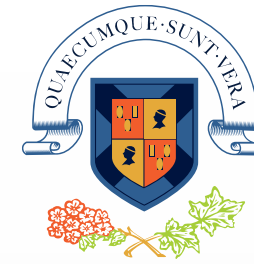


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StFX can only complete most program assessment forms for you after you have registered for your courses for the academic year, not before, because we need to provide specific information about your course load, study dates and costs. Therefore, it is important that you register for your courses in a timely manner once your registration date opens.

A note about your assessment: some students are surprised to discover that their assessment is not enough to cover all costs of full-time study at StFX. The government student loan and grant programs in Canada are supplemental. They are not meant to fully fund all of your costs. There are limits in the programs, even if you are awarded the maximum level of funding available, you will need additional resources to attend StFX.

Follow-up



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In most of the programs you are not finished with the process when you submit your application and receive a funding assessment.

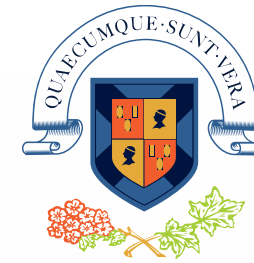


There are additional requirements and it is your responsibility to log into your online account and check email often so that you are aware of what is needed and complete these tasks in a timely manner.



Do not create delays in your funding process!

Follow-up



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Additional steps in most programs include:

Declaration of Consent, Student and Parent(s) – this gives the loan program permission to verify tax information with the Canadian Revenue Agency

Master Student Financial Assistance Agreement (MSFAA) – your loan agreement with your program

Any additional information requested by the program; this may include transcripts from previous study, proof of residency, details of RESPs or other investments, etc.

Disbursement



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Part time funding is paid out in one disbursement, at the beginning of your study period. Full time funding is usually paid out in two disbursements, at the beginning and at the halfway point of your study period. For most undergraduate students this is at the start of the fall and winter terms.

Except for Quebec and the three territories*, all the programs allow direct remittance to your school – this means StFX may request up to the full amount required to satisfy the payment due on your student account from your awarded funds. First term payments are 65% of all fees due September 15, remaining account balances are due in full January 15.

The remainder of your awarded funds, if any, will be deposited directly to your bank account. Your loan program will have your banking information from your completed MSFAA.



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Disbursement

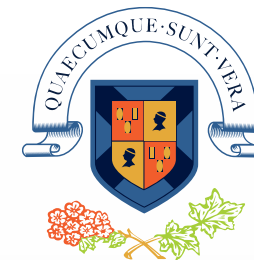
The University must complete a Confirmation of Enrolment (COE) before your funds can be disbursed.

This is a two-step process that involves both the StFX Financial Aid Office and the Student Accounts Office. COEs are completed and returned to the loan programs in the order they are received. A separate COE is required for each disbursement of funds.

If you apply and complete all required tasks in a timely manner, your COE should be processed and funding disbursed in time to meet the university's payment deadlines each term.

Some programs require an additional form to be completed before winter term funding will be made available. For example, students participating with Nova Scotia Student Assistance or Prince Edward Island Financial Services must complete a Pre-Study Report through their MyPath account before the second COE can be released to their school in December.

*The programs in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Quebec, and the Yukon make all funds payable to the student only and then you make payment to your school.



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What you should know about Confirmation Of Enrollments (COEs):

A COE will be sent to the university by your loan program, you do not need to request it.

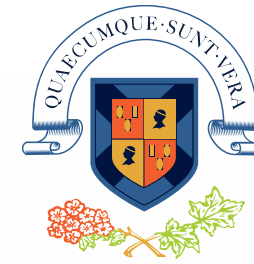
You must be registered in all of your courses before a COE can be completed.

You will see messaging from your program that they are waiting on your school to complete the COE before it has actually been made available to the university to complete, there is a processing delay of up to 5 days in this messaging.

Once the COE is returned to the program, it typically takes 4-10 business days for the funds to be applied to your student account and/or deposited to your bank account.

These two actions do not always happen on the same day, it is common for the university to receive its share of your funding first, and the rest be deposited to your bank account a day or two later.

A Final Note About Government Student Aid

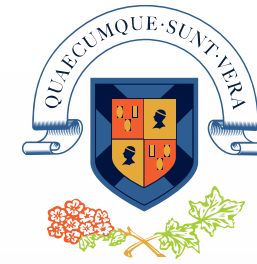


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When you accept government student aid, you are entering into a legal contract with your loan program. Both you and the program have legal obligations to one another. **It is your responsibility to fully understand the loan program you participate in.** This includes familiarizing yourself with how the program(s) works, understanding all of the policies and processes and reading all documents before signing them. The StFX Financial Aid Office is here to help you navigate the loan programs, this does not replace your role in managing your participation in a program.

Likewise, while a parent, guardian or other trusted adult may assist you with the process, you – the student – need to be the one who applies and completes all processing tasks, this is your funding.

Contact Us



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Please contact the StFX Financial Aid Office with any additional questions or concerns you have about Canadian Student Grant and Loan Programs at financialaid@stfx.ca.