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<b>SUBJECT</b>	Non-Refundable Acceptance Deposit Policy - Revision
<b>SUBMITTED TO</b>	Board of Governors
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	November 19, 2021
<b>SESSION</b>	Recommended session criteria from Board Meetings Policy:
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	OPEN
<b>REQUEST</b>	For information only - No action requested
<b>LEAD EXECUTIVE</b>	Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Vancouver
<b>SUPPORTED BY</b>	Ananya Mukherjee Reed, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Okanagan Pam Ratner, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Enrolment & Academic Facilities

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The President's Office amended the non-refundable acceptance deposit policy to establish that students who accept offers of admission to professional or post-baccalaureate programs, and then accept a second UBC offer of admission, will be advised, in advance, that their non-refundable tuition deposits are tied to the initial program and will be forfeited (i.e., not transferred to the program associated with their subsequent acceptance).

The policy referred to above can be found here: <https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/enrolment-services/student-financial-management/tuition-fees-and-non-refundable-acceptance-deposits-governance-and-approval-processes-vancouver>

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## APPENDICES

1. Memorandum approved by the President
2. Letter of support from the Alma Mater Society (AMS)

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Santa J. Ono, President and Vice-Chancellor 

**FROM:** Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Vancouver  
Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Okanagan

**DATE:** August 27, 2021

**RE:** **Non-Refundable Acceptance Deposit Policy - Revision**

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Your approval is requested to amend the non-refundable acceptance deposit policy to establish that students who accept offers of admission to professional or post-baccalaureate programs, and then accept a second UBC offer of admission, will be advised, in advance, that their non-refundable tuition deposits are tied to the initial program and will be forfeited (i.e., not transferred to the program associated with their subsequent acceptance), unless certain conditions are met.

The current policy regarding acceptance deposits states, “The tuition deposit is generally non-refundable if the student decides to not attend UBC. If they make a change to their program of choice, then the non-refundable tuition deposit will be applied against the tuition for the new program.”

The intent of the non-refundable acceptance deposit is to reduce the number of students who accept an offer of admission, but do not register in the program, leaving the possibility of vacant seats in high demand programs. Professional and post-baccalaureate programs have limited seats and acceptance deposits are a key indicator of anticipated attendance. The deposits are aimed at preventing seats remaining unfilled because of last minute changes (which are very costly for the programs and frustrating for competitive applicants who are not admitted because the seats are putatively filled).

The proposed policy statement is intended to exempt post-baccalaureate and professional programs from the practice of transferring deposits from one UBC program to another. The statement, with approval, will be revised to state, “The tuition deposit is generally non-refundable if the student decides to not attend UBC. If the student accepts a program’s offer and then subsequently accepts another UBC program’s offer of admission, then the non-refundable tuition deposit will be applied against the tuition for the program in which the student registers, unless the initial program is a professional or post-baccalaureate program. In the latter case, the deposit will be forfeited.” However, if the initial program successfully fills the vacated seat, the deposit will be

transferred to the first tuition payment for the student's program of choice (i.e., the second program).

The purpose of this proposed policy revision is to ensure that applicants accept an offer of admission for their intended UBC program, rather than accepting multiple offers of admission, from UBC's professional and post-baccalaureate programs, holding those seats, and limiting other applicants' opportunities of enrolment.

Notes:

- There is no proposed policy revision for direct-entry undergraduate programs.
- For transparency, the affected programs will state in their offer letters that acceptance deposits are not transferrable to other UBC programs, unless certain conditions are met.
- This proposed policy revision affects those students who are offered and accept admission in two or more post-baccalaureate and professional programs at UBC, while knowing they can only register in one.
- While losing a deposit does not solve the issue of trying to fill all the limited seats in UBC's post-baccalaureate and professional programs, the potential loss of a deposit may encourage students to carefully consider their plans before accepting an offer of admission.
- Where possible, UBC programs will attempt to align dates by which students must accept their offers of admission.
- The deposit is a small fraction of the lost tuition revenue that programs incur, if seats are left vacant, over the entire duration of the program (i.e., all years).
- Programs currently use waitlists to attempt to fill seats that are filled and then vacated before the start of the academic year; however, the timing of when students change their minds may mean that qualified candidates on these waitlists have made alternative plans or do not have sufficient notice to prepare for the start of the academic year.
- Some programs admit a higher number of students than the number of available seats, in anticipation of late withdrawals ("melt"), but with significant fluctuation in the number of withdrawals year over year, and the risk of over enrolling without sufficient resources, this practice is not possible for all programs.
- The intention of the acceptance deposit is not to place undue hardship on applicants. Special arrangements are made for students who may not be able to pay their deposits at the time that they are due, on a case by case basis. This is outside the scope of this proposed policy change which refers to deposits already collected.

Because this is an administrative policy clarification, an extensive student consultation was not initially conducted. The UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) and UBC Students' Union Okanagan (UBCSUO) were informed on January 2, 2020. To address their concerns, a meeting was held with the AMS and the Graduate Student Society (GSS) on August 11, 2021. All parties were given the opportunity to provide feedback, and have been satisfied that their concerns were addressed and the AMS provided a letter of support (attached).



## RE: Non-Refundable Acceptance Deposit Policy Revision

Dear members of the UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC Vancouver in response to the request for feedback on the new revisions on the current policy regarding acceptance deposits.

The current policy of acceptance deposits states that “the tuition deposit is generally non-refundable if the student decides to not attend UBC, if they make a change to their program of choice, then the non-refundable tuition deposit will be applied against the tuition for the new program.” In an effort to reduce the number of professional and post-baccalaureate applicants who accept an offer of admission, but do not end up attending UBC, the Faculty Planning Office is introducing a revision to the policy that exempts post-baccalaureate and professional programs from the practice of transferring deposits. The purpose of this proposed policy revision is to ensure that applicants accept an offer of admission for the program they intend to attend, rather than accepting multiple offers of admission knowing they can only attend one professional and post-baccalaureate program across the university.

The Alma Mater Society is in favour of this proposed policy revision. The new proposed policy will be effective in preventing seats from remaining unfilled due to last-minute changes. These putatively filled seats may cause frustration for competitive applicants who are not offered admissions. These instances also hurt the programs that rely on deposits and commitments for planning purposes.

While the AMS is supportive of the proposed changes and recognizes the need for them, we would like to raise awareness to a potential issue that should be taken into consideration when implementing this revision. We would like to encourage the University to align the offer-acceptance periods for the programs that are impacted. This would provide flexibility to students who receive offers from faculties at varying times. In addition, we urge UBC to take extra measures to be as transparent as possible in ensuring that students are aware of the revisions when paying the acceptance deposits.

The AMS would like to sincerely thank the Office of Faculty Planning for their commitment to ensuring that student voices are heard. In addition, we look forward to working with UBC to make education affordable and accessible across all levels and supporting the University in its academic mission. We also appreciate the Board’s consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,

**Eshana Bhangu**

Vice President, Academic and University Affairs  
Alma Mater Society