



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**TITLE: POLICY ON REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF A NATIONAL BURSARY**

Policy Summary	This policy governs the requirements for the award of a National Bursary funded by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.
Contact	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
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POLICY ON REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A NATIONAL BURSARY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1. This policy governs the requirements used to determine eligibility for the award of national bursaries funded by the Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) and administered by the Ministry.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Policy are:

- 2.1. To provide a documented set of guidelines to determine the eligibility of the applicants for bursaries offered by the GoRTT; and
- 2.2. To provide a documented set of guidelines to be used in the administration of the bursaries.

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The policy on requirements for the award of a national bursary applies to citizens applying for and / or awarded a bursary by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT).

4. REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Candidates for the award of a national bursary offered by the GoRTT must:

- be a Citizen of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and must be able to provide proof of citizenship;
- not have residency status in any other country;
- attained at least eight (8) subjects units, over a period not exceeding two (2) consecutive years in Form 6, including the year of the award. The eight (8) subject units must comprise both compulsory subjects Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies at the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). Applicants must attain at least 7 units at Grades I-II. Applicants are allowed to have a maximum of one (1) Grade III in their profile;
- provide evidence of acceptance to an accredited/recognised tertiary level local institution or a regional campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI) in keeping with the guidelines of the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) programme;
- provide evidence of completion of GATE's Means Test;
- prepare a purpose statement demonstrating how the programme of study will likely impact the developmental needs of Trinidad and Tobago; and
- provide evidence of extracurricular activities/contribution to community/country.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

4.2 Priority will be given to areas critical to national development as indicated on the Interim Development Needs List with consideration to other existing and emerging areas.

5. GUARANTOR

5.1 Candidates must have a guarantor who will agree to repay the value of the funds expended together with all interest accrued at the rate of 7.5% in the instance that the candidate breaches the Agreement and/or is unwilling to serve his/her obligation.

5.2 The guarantor is required to be:

- over the age of 18;
- a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago
- able to demonstrate financial capability to repay the full value of the bursary loan;
- not be the guarantor of a current recipient of an award offered by the GoRTT; save for exemption at 5.3 and
- not be a previous scholar who is obligated to the GoRTT.

5.3 A guarantor may be allowed to guarantee more than one (1) bursary provided he/she can demonstrate financial capability to repay the full value of the bursaries.

5.4 Where the guarantor exceeds the compulsory age of retirement, he/she must provide evidence of ability to repay the funds expended on the bursary.

5.5 Where the circumstances of the guarantor have changed or the guarantor has died, the candidate must immediately inform the Ministry and nominate a new guarantor within three (3) months of such changed circumstances or death.

5.6 Where the candidate is unable to nominate a new guarantor within three (3) months, the Agreement will be suspended.

5.7 Where the candidate is unable to nominate a new guarantor within three (3) months of the suspension, the bursary will be terminated, and the candidate is liable to repay the GoRTT all funds expended.

5.8 Any exceptional cases will be considered.

6. DEFERRING THE START OF THE BURSARY

Once the offer for the award of the bursary has been approved by Cabinet:

6.1 Candidates will be required to indicate their interest in the national bursary no later than three (3) months from the date of the announcement of the award. Where no response is received from the candidate within three (3) months from the date of announcement, the candidate will be considered as having declined the offer and the offer will be withdrawn

6.2 Candidates are required to enter into an Agreement and commence studies immediately upon acceptance of the award.

6.3 Approval may be considered to delay accessing the award of the national bursary for a period not exceeding one (1) year if at least one (1) of the following conditions applies:

- the recipient is medically unfit to take up such award as evidenced by medical reports which includes a prognosis for recovery from a registered medical practitioner. The Ministry reserves the right to seek the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health; and
- other extenuating circumstances which will be considered on a case by case basis by the Permanent Secretary.

7. EXECUTING THE AGREEMENT

7.1 Recipients are required to sign a National Bursary Agreement (NBA) which outlines the obligations of the GoRTT, the recipient and the guarantor.

7.2 Under the terms of the Agreement, recipients shall be required to serve a period of obligatory service upon completion of the programme of study, such period to be determined by the amount of funds expended.

7.3 All recipients must provide the following **prior** to signing the Agreement:

- (i) the actual name of the degree to be awarded;
- (ii) the offer of acceptance and/or the status letter (where applicable)
- (iii) the minimum number of courses and credits required to complete the degree;
- (iv) the name/s of the course/s or subject/s proposed to be pursued during the programme of study;
- (v) the academic year and semester in which it is proposed that the courses will be pursued; and
- (vi) any changes in location or academic institution associated with the pursuit of the degree, including compulsory conferences, field trips or long-term stay associated with the course of study in any foreign jurisdiction and which will be required for the award of the degree;

8. ACCREDITATION

8.1 Both the academic institution and the programme of study must be accredited or recognised by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) to be eligible for the national bursary offered by the GoRTT.

9. PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

9.1. The Ministry will facilitate the pursuit for the programme of study through the following delivery approaches:

- (i) Full Time Onsite;
- (ii) Part-Time Onsite;
- (iii) Full Time Online;
- (iv) Part-Time Online;

9.2 The programme delivery approach and /modes of studies must be stipulated by the academic institution. Consideration will be given to the impact on the current

global conditions, changes followed by acts of God, or any other extenuating circumstances that may directly or indirectly affect the recipient’s delivery approach.

Where applicable, a letter must be provided by the candidate to the SATD.

9.3 The national bursary will be awarded by the GoRTT for the programme of study leading to a Bachelor’s Degree **only**.

9.4 Where a course is a combined or integrated combination degree, the GoRTT will only fund the part of the programme leading to the undergraduate level of the degree for which the bursary was awarded. Exceptions are made for the pursuit of medical and law degrees.

9.5 Priority will be given to areas critical to national development as indicated on the Interim Development Needs list with consideration to other existing and emerging areas.

10. DURATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF STUDY

10.1 The duration of the programme of study must be stipulated by the academic Institution.

10.2 All recipients must complete their programme of study within the least possible time as stipulated by the academic institution.

10.3 The following documents will be used in determining the duration of the programme of study:

- (i) The official course outline and course schedule over the period of study;
- (ii) The minimum number of courses or credits required to complete the programme to graduate.

The duration for funding will be guided as follows:

DEGREE	MAXIMUM DURATION
BACHELOR’S DEGREES	Three (3) to four (4) years where required by the academic institution and approved by the GoRTT.

<p>MEDICAL DEGREES including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Medicine; Bachelor of Surgery, MBBS • Doctor of Dental Surgery, DDS • Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, DVM <p>** any other related course of study</p>	<p>Five (5) years</p> <p>** Funding duration where stipulated by the academic institution and approved by the GoRTT.</p>
<p>LAW DEGREE including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Law (LLB) • Legal Education Certificate (LEC) 	<p>Five (5) years</p> <p>Four (4) years only where required by the academic institution and approved by the GoRTT.</p> <p><i>Three (3) years LLB followed by: Two (2) years LEC</i></p>

10.4 All recipients will be expected to reside in the approved country of study throughout the duration of their programme of study, unless otherwise requested and approved by the relevant Ministry.

10.5 The Ministry will also consider any extenuating circumstance/s owing to the impact of current or global conditions, or changes followed by acts of God, that may directly or indirectly affect the recipient's ability to continue to reside in the approved country of study.

10.6 In cases identified in 10.5 above, the Ministry will make the necessary arrangements for recipient's who are residing within the regional campuses to return to Trinidad and Tobago.

11. FUNDING

11.1 The bursary will comprise of the following payments:

- Medical scholars - A book allowance of \$9,711 as first time payment and thereafter \$5,711 payment annually.
- Non-medical - A book allowance of \$8,062 as first time payment and thereafter \$4,062 payment annually.

- A personal maintenance allowance of \$3,043.00 per month, payable per quarter of the fiscal year (Dec, March, June and September)
- 100% GATE funding for study at local institutions
- Regional study will be subjected to the prevailing guidelines and funding levels for all GATE recipients.

11.2 Recipients may receive/accept additional source of funding from another institution, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or Private Partnership Enterprises (PPE) provided that there is no obligation.

12. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

12.1 The Ministry shall monitor recipients of the National Bursary during the period of their programme of study and the duration of the obligatory service, to ensure compliance with the terms of this policy and the National Bursary Agreement.

12.2 Recipients are expected to inform the Ministry of any changes in their status relating to the administration of the bursary, including matters such as citizenship/residency, academic performance, health, and employment; and seek the necessary approvals as prescribed in this policy and the National Bursary Agreement.

12.3 Other requests/application submitted by recipients shall be considered on a case by case basis in relation to with this policy.

12.4 Recipients who fail to comply with the requirements of this Policy and the National Bursary Agreement may be deemed to be in breach of the Agreement and shall be liable to repay the value of funds expended on their award, with interest.

12.5 Where a recipient is determined to be in breach of his/her Agreement, the GoRTT shall pursue all necessary actions to recover the sums owed, including debt collection and/or legal action through the Attorney General. Recipients will be required to upload to the Ministry a copy of their status letter and academic transcripts at the end of each academic year.

12.6 Recipients will be required to maintain a cumulative grade point average/Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.5 per academic year or equivalent for the continuation of payments.

12.7 Failure to maintain the GPA will result in the suspension of the funding/Bursary until the academic performance has been improved i.e. evidenced by a cumulative GPA of 2.5.

12.8 If the required academic standing improves in the following academic year and the University's requirements for continuation is met, the bursary will be reinstated for the next academic year (where applicable).

13. CHANGE OF PROGRAMME OF STUDY

13.1 A recipient is required to seek and obtain approval before changing his/her programme of study.

13.2 Approval may be granted for a change of programme of study, provided that:

- the recipient is in good academic standing;
- the new programme of study is identified as an area critical to national development and other existing and emerging areas;
- the recipient meets any additional cost associated with the new programme of study and;
- the recipient has not yet executed a National Bursary Agreement.

13.3 Where approval is granted for a change of programme of study, the number of years already paid on the bursary shall be deducted from the period required to complete the new course of study.

13.4 A recipient shall not be granted approval to change his/her programme of study more than once.

14. CHANGE OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

14.1 A recipient is required to seek and obtain approval before changing his/her academic institution.

14.2 Approval may be granted for a change of academic institution, provided that:

- the recipient is in good academic standing;
- the programme of study is accredited and/or recognized by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT);
- the recipient meets any additional cost associated with the new programme of study and;
- the recipient has not yet executed a National Bursary Agreement.

14.3 Where approval is granted for a change of academic institution, the number of years already paid on the bursary shall be deducted from the period required to complete the programme of study at the new academic institution.

14.4 A recipient shall not be granted approval to change his/her academic institution more than once.

15. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

15.1 Approval may be granted for a recipient to take a temporary leave of absence during the period of his/her bursary, in the following circumstances:

- mental or physical illness, as certified by a registered medical practitioner; the duration of such leave of absence will be guided by the prognosis for recovery
- pregnancy continuing into maternity leave for a period not exceeding one (1) calendar year
- optional internship/immersion opportunities - not exceeding one (1) academic year
- death of an immediate family member/guarantor (parent (including parent by adoption), child, sibling, guardian, ward, spouse/cohabitant - not exceeding one (1) academic semester
- any other situation which in the opinion of the GoRTT is both extenuating and beyond the control of the recipient.

15.2 Funding will be suspended during the period of leave of absence.

15.3 Where possible, prior approval of the GoRTT must be sought and obtained before proceeding on such leave of absence.

16. EMPLOYMENT DURING THE PROGRAMME OF STUDY

16.1 Recipients are not permitted to accept full time employment during their programme of study.

17. EXTENSION OF THE DURATION OF THE BURSARY

17.1 Approval may be granted for the extension of the duration of a bursary if at least one (1) of the following applies:

- There is an official change in the programme of study or course schedule by the academic institution;
- The occurrence of a natural disaster or civil unrest which affects the duration of the course schedule of the academic institution; and

- The recipient is required to write certification examinations necessary for completion of studies which are not available during or by the end of the stipulated academic year;

17.2 The terms and conditions of the Agreement remain in effect during any approved period of extension of the duration of a bursary.

17.3 Where applicable, consideration will be given to the impact on current and global conditions, changes followed by acts of God, or any other circumstances that may directly or indirectly affect the recipient's delivery approach and expected completion date of the programme of study. A letter must be provided by the recipient to the relevant Ministry stating the particulars of the extension of the programme of study. The Ministry will facilitate the cost associated with the extension to a maximum of \$50,000.00.

18. ADDITIONAL OR REPEAT COURSES

18.1 A recipient who elects to pursue additional credits/courses shall be required to cover any additional costs associated with pursuing such courses.

18.2 The recipient must not in any event exceed the duration of the programme of study as stipulated in the Agreement unless prior approval is granted.

18.3 A recipient who has failed any course(s) including additional or repeat courses, shall be required to fund all cost related to repeating the course(s) or pursuing alternative course(s).

19. DEFERRAL OF OBLIGATORY SERVICE

19.1 Consideration of requests for deferral of obligatory service shall be guided by:

- the country's need to harness areas of study which are deemed to be of high priority and critical for national development; and
- the opportunity being presented to increase the value of the recipient's contribution to national development.

19.2 Approval may be granted to defer the commencement or continuation of obligatory service if the recipient:

- wishes to pursue postgraduate studies aligned to the priority human resource needs of Trinidad and Tobago;
- is required to pursue additional training and/or internships abroad or locally which are necessary to practise within the profession;
- wishes to pursue short-term employment for not more than two (2) years in a foreign jurisdiction which will provide requisite skills, abilities and work experience in the field of study;

- requires additional time to complete his/her programme of study, thesis or research;
- is medically unfit, as evidenced by a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner.

Exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis.

19.3 Any substantive change to the condition under which the deferral was granted requires the recipient to re-apply for a deferral.

19.4 Recipients shall be granted only one (1) deferral on the grounds identified above.

19.5 An approved deferral may be withdrawn if a recipient fails to immediately advise the GoRTT of any changes to the conditions under which the deferral was granted. Such changes include, but are not limited to:

- change of employer/ termination of the employment contract (where approval was granted for the recipient to accept short-term employment in a foreign jurisdiction)
- change of guarantor;
- change of programme of study/academic institution;
- change of institution or medical residency programme;
- abandonment of programme of study/academic institution;
- change of citizenship or Immigration status;
- completion of the programme of study/internship before the expected date of completion; or
- any further medical complication/s

19.6 Where an approved deferral is withdrawn, the recipient shall be required to report in person to the GoRTT no later than two (2) weeks from the notice of withdrawal.

19.7 A recipient may at any time during the period for which his/her approval was granted, request a termination of the deferral and proceed to commence or continue his/her obligatory service.

19.8 During the period of an approved deferral, interest will not accrue on the sum expended on the bursary. However, should the recipient be subsequently found to be in breach of his/her Agreement or choose to repay the GoRTT in lieu of service, interest in respect of the period of deferral shall be included when determining the amount to be repaid on the bursary.

20. REPORTING UPON COMPLETION OF STUDIES

20.1 Recipients are required to report in person to the GoRTT upon completion of their programme of study, as follows:

- locally – within two (2) weeks of completion; and
- regionally – within one (1) month of completion.

20.1.1 As defined in the National Bursary Agreement: - *“completion date means the end date of the final semester as certified by the academic institution of the course of study unless otherwise stated and approved by the lender.”*

20.2 Where a recipient is unable to report in person he/she must, at least one (1) month prior to the date of completion of the programme of study, seek approval to report at a later date.

20.3 Recipients who are pursuing their programme of study regionally and have obtained an approved deferral of obligatory service within the reporting period shall be required to present themselves to the nearest Trinidad and Tobago Embassy.

20.4 A recipient who has completed the reporting process must remain in Trinidad and Tobago and seek:

- employment and inform the Ministry once gainfully employed;
- approval to defer his/her obligatory service; and
- approval to travel outside of Trinidad and Tobago. Where such approval is granted, the recipient shall be required to report to the GoRTT within three (3) days after his/her return.

21. FULFILMENT OF OBLIGATORY SERVICE

21.1 Under the terms of the National Bursary Agreement, recipients will be required to serve a period of obligatory service upon completion of the programme of study, such period to be determined by the amount of funds expended on the bursary and matched to the Table of Obligatory Service in respect to National Bursary funding below.

Cost of Scholarship	Period of Obligatory Service
Up to \$100,000	One (1) year
Over \$100,000 and up to \$300,000	Two (2) years

Over \$300,000 and up to \$400,000	Three (3) years
Over \$400,000 and up to \$600,000	Four (4) years
Over \$600,000	Five (5) years

Table of Obligatory Service in respect to National Bursary funding.

21.2 Recipients will be required to serve a period of obligatory service in Trinidad and Tobago in the Public and Private Sector based on the sum expended on the bursary and matched to the Table of Obligatory Service in respect to National Bursary.

21.3 Recipients are required to provide employment and residency status updates every six (6) months, and must immediately advise the Ministry of changes/intended changes in respect thereof.

22. REPAYMENT OF THE NATIONAL BURSARY IN LIEU OF OBLIGATORY SERVICE

22.1 A recipient may choose to repay the value of the funds expended on the bursary plus interest in lieu of serving his/her obligatory service.

22.2 The repayment amount shall be calculated as follows:

- The funds expended (principal) on the bursary (book allowance, personal maintenance allowance and GATE funding)
- Plus the interest accrued from the month of the first payment made to or on behalf of the recipient and thereafter, using compound interest.
- The total repayment amount will be divided by the number of months that the recipients is obligated to repay, which determines the monthly payment.

22.3 The recipient shall be required to pay the monthly installments as prescribed in the repayment schedule.

22.4 The recipient may at any time make payments in excess of the monthly scheduled amount or repay the full indebtedness.

22.5 Where a recipient default in three (3) or more consecutive payments, a late fee shall apply in accordance with market rates on each payment that was defaulted. Where a recipient fails to pay on the outstanding repayment schedule and the late fees incurred for a period in excess of one (1) month, the GoRTT shall pursue all actions including debt collection and/or legal action through the Attorney General.

23. COMPLETION OF OBLIGATORY SERVICE

23.1 Completion of obligatory service will be considered where a recipient has:

- served the prescribed period of obligatory service matched to the Table of Obligatory Service in respect to National Bursary; and/or
- repaid the full value of the funds expended on the bursary together with interest accrued from the month of the first payment made to or on behalf of the recipient.

24. RELEASE FROM OBLIGATORY SERVICE

24.1 A recipient may be released from his/her obligation to serve the GoRTT under the terms and conditions of the National Bursary Agreement only where the recipient is medically unfit to successfully fulfil his/her obligatory service as evidenced by medical reports which includes a prognosis from a registered medical practitioner. The Ministry reserves the right to seek the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health.

25. BREACH OF THE NATIONAL BURSARY AGREEMENT

25.1 A breach is a failure by the recipient to abide by his/her contractual obligations. A breach of the Agreement can occur at any time after the execution of the Agreement, during the programme of study or period of obligatory service.

25.2 The following infractions constitute breaches of the Agreement Failure to diligently pursue the programme of study towards obtaining the qualification within the stipulated time;

- Failure to meet/maintain the required academic standard.
- Change in the academic institution or programme of study without approval;
- Abandoning the programme of study;
- Failure to report within the stipulated period upon completion of the programme of study;
- Applying for or changing residency status/citizenship from a foreign country while receiving bursary funding or during the period of obligatory service;
- Taking up employment outside of Trinidad and Tobago without prior approval;
- Being convicted of a criminal offence;
- Expulsion from the academic institution;
- Fraud and misrepresentation, for example, knowingly providing incorrect or misleading information in either securing or continuing the bursary funding; and

- Failure to disclose any aspect of variations as indicated within this Policy.

25.3 Where the recipient breaches the Agreement, the GoRTT shall take appropriate legal action.

25.4 Where a recipient is unable or unwilling to fulfil his/her obligations as indicated in this policy or the Agreement the recipient:

- shall be placed in breach and be pursued for repayment; and/or
- may indicate forthwith and repay in full all funds expended towards the bursary including all interest accrued.

25.5 All obligations shall be discharged upon the death of the recipient, as evidenced by presentation of an official death certificate or a certificate of registration of death.

26. ADMINISTRATION

26.1 All recipients will be subject to the supervision and control of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry with responsibility for national bursary.

26.2 The Ministry with the responsibility for scholarships will seek to apply this Policy in a fair and transparent manner. There will be no discrimination based on any factor including, but not limited to gender, race, religion or social class in the application of the conditions herein.

27. FRAUD & MISREPRESENTATION

27.1 The Ministry will put systems and processes in place to verify that all information submitted is true and accurate.

27.2 Where a recipient has intentionally provided erroneous, misleading or fraudulent information to the Ministry in either securing or continuing the National Bursary Agreement, the GoRTT will immediately terminate the Agreement and refer the matter to the relevant authorities.

27.3 Such information includes but may not be limited to:

- a. Academic Certificates and Transcripts
- b. Identity Information
- c. Residency and or Citizenship Information
- d. Employment Details

27.4 The person will be required to repay to the GoRTT the full amount of the bursary together with all interest accrued forthwith.

27.5 The Ministry with the responsibility for bursary will report all activities that violate the Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the relevant law enforcement agency.

28. FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

28.1 The Ministry with responsibility for the National Bursary will ensure that this Policy is administered in a fair and equitable manner by putting systems in place to treat with any areas where a conflict of interest arises.

29. COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW OF POLICY

29.1 This Policy will be periodically reviewed and revised where necessary to ensure adherence to the GoRTT's policy objectives.

29.2 Any deviation from this Policy will require the approval of the Cabinet.

29.3 Recipients will be encouraged to provide feedback on this Policy. Such feedback will be considered in the Policy Review Process.

29.4 The Ministry will seek to ensure that there is strict compliance to this Policy and will continue to review and update Bursary policies in order to meet the expanding needs of recipients and the GoRTT.

30. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE POLICY

This policy will come into effect on March 10th, 2022.