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POL-003: AUSU Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries Program

1. Purpose

Scholarships and awards demonstrate AUSU's commitment to recognising the academic achievements, community spirit, and positive contributions of its membership within the University and beyond. AUSU bursaries provide supplemental assistance to members facing financial barriers or sudden hardships that impact their academic progress.

This policy establishes an equitable and transparent process for administering the AUSU Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries Program and clarifies the procedures for application, evaluation, and disbursement. The program shall be administered in accordance with AUSU bylaws, Council policies, and principles of fairness, transparency, and responsible stewardship of student resources.

2. Scope

This policy establishes the governance framework for the AUSU Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries Program. It applies to all AUSU-administered scholarships, awards, and bursaries, whether annual, biannual, or one-time, and defines the principles, processes, and oversight mechanisms that govern their administration.

This policy does not apply to external awards administered by other organizations, AUSU staff or contractor recognition programs, or honoraria issued under separate Council authority.

3. Policy Statement

The AUSU Scholarships, Awards, and Bursaries Program is designed to:
- Enrich the experiences of AUSU Active Members by promoting academic and non-academic excellence; and
- Diminish obstacles to higher education by providing financial assistance to those in need.

Only Active Members in good standing are eligible for AUSU scholarships, awards, and bursaries unless otherwise specified in this policy.

AUSU may publish the names of scholarship and award recipients to celebrate their academic and community achievements. Bursary recipient names will remain confidential.

4. Definitions

Bursaries: Financial awards granted to members in financial distress or facing sudden hardships.

Scholarships: Awards based on academic achievement, cumulative GPA, merit, or criteria specified in the individual scholarship descriptions.

Awards: Recognition given for creativity, leadership, volunteerism, community engagement, or personal resilience, as detailed in the respective award descriptions.

Active Member: As defined in the AUSU bylaws, a Member who is currently enrolled in at least one 3-credit AU undergraduate course, has paid AUSU membership fees, and is in good standing.

Good Standing: As defined in the AUSU bylaws, a Member who has no outstanding debts to AUSU and has not been declared "not in good standing" by Council.

Credits Completed: refers exclusively to credits earned through successful completion of AU undergraduate courses and Challenge for Credit courses (as reflected on the transcript). Credits earned in graduate courses, transferred credits, credits from other institutions, or via Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) are excluded.

Financial Need: Circumstances in which an Active Member faces financial barriers, unexpected hardship, or insufficient resources to meet essential academic or living expenses.

Conflict of Interest: Any situation in which an applicant, reviewer, or decision-maker has a personal, financial, or familial interest that could influence or appear to influence the award decision.

Digital Misrepresentation: The use of false, borrowed, or invalid AU credentials, or the unauthorized sharing of Member-restricted application links or forms.

5. Administration of the Program
a. Application and Nomination Submission
  i.   All applications and nominations must be submitted by the specified deadline and include all required supporting documentation. Incomplete applications will be rejected.
  ii. Applicants must provide accurate information and may be required to verify their Active Member status. The use of false, borrowed, or invalid AU credentials, or the sharing of Member-restricted application links, is prohibited and may result in ineligibility or referral to Council under the Code of Conduct.
  iii. Bursary applications are accepted year-round.

b. Evaluation & Processing

i. Seasonal Scholarships and Awards

Evaluated by AUSU's Operations and Financial Health Committee (OFHC) or its designated subgroup, with the selection report submitted to Council for approval following each season. Submissions will be processed and the decisions communicated to applicants within six-week (6 weeks) of the designated application deadline. Only selected applicants will be notified.

ii. Emergency and Year-Round Bursaries

Evaluated by AUSU's Operations and Financial Health Committee (OFHC) or its designated subgroup with selection reports submitted monthly by the OFHC to Council for approval. Complete applications will be processed and decisions communicated to selected applicants within two (2) weeks. Only selected applicants will be notified.

iii. Number of Awards Issued

The number of scholarships, awards, and bursaries issued in any fiscal year may vary at the discretion of the OFHC, provided all allocations remain within the maximum annual budget approved by Council. This flexibility ensures the program can respond to fluctuations in application volume and strength across categories and seasons.

iv. Additional Documentation

The OFHC may request additional documentation or verification at any stage of evaluation.

v. Conflict of Interest and Recusal

Any OFHC member, reviewer, or Councillor involved in the evaluation or approval process must recuse themselves from reviewing or voting on any application where they have a personal, academic, professional, or financial relationship with the applicant, or where a reasonable person would perceive a conflict of interest. Recusals must be recorded in the committee's report to Council.

6. Application Periods

a. Scholarships & Seasonal Awards
- Two (2) application periods per fiscal year: October 1–31 and April 1–30.

b. Bursaries
- Applications are accepted year-round.

7. Eligibility Criteria

a. General Eligibility

 i. All AUSU Councillors, judges, and any individuals providing paid services to AUSU are ineligible for scholarships, awards, and bursaries during their term of service.

 ii. Applicants must be Active Members in good standing at the time of application and at the time of disbursement.

 iii. Direct family members of AUSU employees, contractors, or Councillors are ineligible for all scholarships, awards, and bursaries due to inherent conflicts of interest and the need to maintain public trust in the program.

 iv. Applicants denied a Travel, Computer, or Academic Support Bursary must wait twelve (12) months before reapplying for that same bursary.

b. Academic and Credit Requirements

 i. Unless specified otherwise, applicants must have a minimum of six (6) AU credits completed, and maintain a minimum 2.00 GPA.

 ii. Transcripts are required for all submissions unless otherwise noted. Unofficial AU transcripts are permitted. DegreeWorks is not accepted as it does not constitute an official academic record.

c. Documentation and Verification

 i. Applicants must submit all requested documents. Additional documentation may be requested, with a deadline of five (5) business days for submission.

 ii. AUSU may verify Active Member status, academic standing, and other eligibility requirements directly with Athabasca University.

 iii. If false information, misrepresentation, or the use of invalid AU credentials is suspected, the applicant may be deemed ineligible, and a motion may be submitted to Council to place the Member "not in good standing."

d. Application Privacy and Confidentiality

 i. Information is used solely for program evaluation and administration in accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA).

 ii. AUSU may publish the names of scholarship and award recipients.

 iii. Bursary recipient names will remain confidential.

 iv. Applications are confidential and access is limited to individuals authorized under Council policy, including the OFHC and Council for approval purposes.

 v. Retention and destruction of records follow AUSU's Records Management Framework.

e. Creation and Distribution of Additional Awards

 i. AUSU may create one-time or special-purpose awards at Council's discretion.

 ii. The Operations and Financial Health Committee (OFHC) may recommend additional scholarships, awards, or bursaries for Council

approval to maximize support for student needs and celebrate Member accomplishments.

    iii. All new awards must be approved by Council and administered in accordance with this policy.

8. Scholarship Descriptions

a. AUSU Faculty Scholarships

    i. Purpose

To recognise AU students for academic excellence and impactful contributions within their field of study.

    ii. Programs Covered
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Scholarship
- Faculty of Science and Technology Scholarship
- Faculty of Business Scholarship
- Faculty of Health Disciplines Scholarship

    iii. Requirements
1. Active enrollment in a program within the faculty for which the applicant is applying.
2. Minimum GPA of 3.6, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
3. Completion of at least 18 AU undergraduate credits (as defined in Section 4).
4. Submission of either a 750-word essay or a PowerPoint presentation (9–12 slides).

    iv. Submission Options
1. Option A — 750-word essay clearly describing:
   - How AU studies are shaping or supporting the applicant's academic or career goals.
   - How the applicant's current contributions to their field are supported by their AU experience.
2. Option B — PowerPoint presentation
   - 9–12 slides.
   - Must address the same themes as the essay.
   - Must use appropriate visual formatting and include only public-domain or self-created images, charts, or videos.
   - May include audio, provided the total presentation does not exceed 8 minutes.
   - Must include a reference slide citing all media sources.

    v. Selection Criteria
1. Recipients will be selected based on:
2. Strength and impact of their contributions to their field.

3. Clarity, originality, and quality of their submission.
4. Overall GPA.
    vi. **Eligibility**
1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
2. May receive this scholarship no more than once every five (5) years.
    vii. **Value: $1000**
    viii. **Estimated Allocation: Two (2) awards per faculty per Season**

b. Academic Excellence Scholarship

    i. **Purpose**

To reward outstanding academic achievement among AUSU Active Members.

    ii. **Requirements**
1. Minimum GPA: 3.85, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
2. Completion of at least 30 AU undergraduate credits.

    iii. **Tie-Breakers**

Applied in the following order:
- Number of A+ grades (6-credit courses count as two).
- Total AU credits completed.
- Number of A grades.

    iv. **Submission and Selection Criteria:**
1. Only transcripts are required.
2. Scholarships will be awarded to applicants with the highest GPA, using tie-breakers as needed.

    v. **Eligibility**
1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
2. May receive this scholarship no more than once every five (5) years.
    vi. **Value: $1000**
    vii. **Estimated Allocation: Seven (7) awards per Season**

9. Award Descriptions

a. The Storyteller Award

    i. **Purpose**

To foster creativity and storytelling among AU undergraduate students.

    ii. **Requirements**
1. One creative medium from the following:

- ○ Artwork: Must be digitized; a 200-word explanation is required if the medium is subjective.
- ○ Story: 500–900 words.
- ○ Video: 5–7 minutes in length.
- ○ Poetry: 100–200 words, with a brief explanation.

2. Minimum cumulative GPA: 2.0, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
3. Completion of at least 12 AU credits.
4. Submission must be original and not previously submitted for any AUSU awards.

iii. Submission and Selection Criteria:

1. Evaluation of submissions will take into consideration:
   - ○ Creativity & Originality – Does the submission offer a unique or compelling perspective?
   - ○ Relevance to Theme – Does it effectively communicate their educational journey?
   - ○ Emotional or Intellectual Impact – Does it resonate, inspire, or make the viewer think?
   - ○ Technical Skill – How well-executed is the submission given the medium?
   - ○ Effort & Passion – Does it feel thoughtful and meaningful?

2. Submissions must be new and original. Resubmissions of old or copied content will be disqualified.
3. By submitting an application, permission is granted to AUSU to retain and share the winning submissions on AUSU's website and social media platforms. Credit will be given to the content creator with the use of the material.

iv. Eligibility

1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
2. Awarded once per Member per fiscal year.

v. Value: $500
vi. Estimated Allocation: Seven (7) awards per Season.

b. Returning Student Awards

i. Purpose

To recognise the resilience and determination of AU students who return after an absence of five (5) or more years from formal education.

ii. Requirements:

1. Applicants are required to share their story, their passion for pursuing a post-secondary education, and the challenges they faced in restarting their academic journey through one of the following formats:
   - ○ Essay: 500–650 words, or
   - ○ PowerPoint Presentation: 7–10 slides, or

- Video: 3–4 minutes.
        2. Minimum cumulative GPA: 2.0, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
        3. Completion of 12 to 40 AU credits in the 24 months before the month in which the application is submitted, following a break of 5 or more years from any formal education.
    iii. **Submission and Selection Criteria:**
        1. The submission should demonstrate originality, organisation, and clear presentation.
        2. Preference will be given to the applicant with the highest level of academic achievement and or contributions to academia or their learning community.
    iv. **Eligibility:**
        1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
        2. Awarded no more than once every five (5) years per Member.
    v. **Value: $500**
    vi. **Estimated Allocation: Four (4) awards per Season.**

c. AUSU Resilient Scholar Award

  i. **Purpose**

  To recognise individuals who have overcome significant hardships or academic barriers and achieved notable academic success.

  ii. **Requirements:**
        1. Minimum GPA: 2.7 supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
        2. Completion of at least 12 AU credits with supporting documentation.
        3. Submission of an account of the challenges overcome via one of the following:
            - Essay: 500–650 words, or
            - PowerPoint Presentation: 7–10 slides, or
            - Video: 3–4 minutes.
  iii. **Submission and Selection Criteria:**
        1. The submission should demonstrate clarity, organisation, and clear presentation.
        2. Preference will be given to the applicant with the highest level of academic achievement and or contributions to academia.
  iv. **Eligibility:**
        1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
        2. Awarded no more than once every five (5) years per Member.

        v.   **Value: $1000**
       vi.   **Estimated Allocation: Ten (10) awards per Season.**

d. AUSU Community Impact & Engagement Award

    i.   **Purpose**

To recognise AU students who have made outstanding contributions to their community, including volunteer work with AUSU, AU, or other organisations, and supported other students at AU through tutoring, answering course-based questions on social media, or volunteering to assist with AUSU events.

    ii.   **Requirements:**

1. Minimum GPA: 2.0 supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
2. Completion of at least 12 AU credits with supporting documentation.
3. Two reference letters with full contact information. References cannot include family members. Instead of letters, videos from references, with a maximum length of 2 minutes, will also be accepted, provided their complete contact information is included in the application.
4. Submit a contribution narrative via a 500–650 word essay, a PowerPoint presentation (9–12 slides), or a 3–5 minute video.
5. Additional evidence such as screenshots of social media engagement to assist students, for example, may be included.

    iii. **Submission and Selection Criteria**

Submissions will be evaluated based on clarity, originality, and contributions. Applicants must submit one of the following:

1. A well crafted 500-650 word essay that clearly:
   - Explain and describe their volunteerism.
   - Describe their contributions to the local or AU community and how they have made a difference in their community.
2. A PowerPoint instead of a written essay, with the following criteria:
   - 9-12 slides
   - Follows the same guidelines for the topic as the essay.
   - Appropriate visual formatting that corresponds with the topic, using images, charts, or videos, obtained from the public domain, or the applicant's own sources.
   - May also include an audio component, provided the entire PowerPoint presentation is not over 8 minutes.
   - A reference page, citing the sources of any videos or images used.
3. A 3-5 minutes video
   - Follows the same guidelines for the topic as the essay.
   - Demonstrates originality, clarity, and creativity.

      iv.   Eligibility
1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
2. Awarded once per Member per fiscal year.

     v.   Value: $1000

    vi.   Estimated Allocation: Five (5) awards per Season.

10. Bursary Descriptions

a. General Bursary Information

Bursaries provide supplemental assistance to members facing financial barriers or sudden hardships impacting their academic progress.

Recipient names remain confidential.

Applications are accepted year-round, and processed within two (2) weeks.

b. Computer Bursaries

     i.   Purpose

To provide a laptop for coursework to members demonstrating financial need.

     ii.   Details:

AUSU purchases the computer and ships it directly to the recipient.

AUSU assumes no liability for the use or maintenance of the computer once received.

No cash alternative, reimbursement, or substitution of any kind will be issued in place of the computer.

    iii.   Requirements:
1. Minimum of six (6) AU undergraduate credits, with supporting documents.
2. Minimum GPA: 2.00, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
3. Must demonstrate financial need.
4. A Canadian physical address.

    iv.   Eligibility:
1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
2. Awarded no more than once every five (5) years per Member.

     v.   Value: One computer per bursary valued up to $750.

    vi.   Estimated Allocation: Sixteen (16) bursaries per Fiscal Year.

c. Travel Bursaries

     i.   Purpose

To assist members with travel expenses to attend AU on-site labs.

    ii. **Requirements:**
- Minimum of six (6) AU undergraduate credits.
- Minimum GPA: 2.00, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).
- Demonstrate financial need and provide course registration information.
- Submit an essay (300 words minimum)
- An application must be submitted within 30 days after attending a lab or practicum.
- Must submit an essay (minimum 300 words).
- A confirmation of attendance must be provided directly to AUSU via email to ausu@ausu.org from the AU coordinator.
- Receipts for eligible expenses (travel and/or accommodations) must be provided.

    iii. **Eligibility:**
- Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
- Maximum $500 per Member per fiscal year.

    iv. **Value: Up to $500 per recipient per fiscal year.**

    v. **Estimated Allocation: Twelve (12) bursaries per Fiscal Year.**

d. Academic Support Bursaries

    i. **Purpose**

To assist members with AU fees—including course extensions, and supplemental exam fees—during urgent financial need or unforeseen circumstances.

    ii. **Details**

Fees will be paid directly to AU on behalf of the member; if an application is received within 30 days with required receipts, fees may be disbursed directly to the qualified applicant.

    iii. **Requirements:**
1. Must demonstrate financial need.
2. Provide an explanation of the unforeseen circumstances in a 300 words essay.
3. Minimum of six (6) AU undergraduate credits and a GPA of 2.00, supported by an AU transcript (unofficial transcript permitted; DegreeWorks not accepted).

    iv. **Eligibility:**
1. Must be an AUSU Active Member in good standing.
2. Maximum $500 per Member per fiscal year.

    v. **Value: Up to $500 per recipient per fiscal year.**

    vi. **Estimated Allocation: Twenty (20) bursaries per Fiscal Year.**

11. Payment and Shipping Requirements

a. Electronic Payments

    i.   All bursary and scholarship payments require the recipient to have an active Canadian bank account for electronic funds transfer.

    ii.   Recipients who do not have a Canadian bank account may request that the awarded amount be transferred to their Athabasca University student account to be applied as credit toward AU tuition or fees. This request must be made at the time the award is accepted.

b. Computer Bursary Shipping

    i.   The computer bursary provides a physical device, not a cash equivalent. A valid Canadian residential shipping address is required to receive the device.

    ii.   Computers can only be shipped within Canada, and shipments cannot be sent to PO boxes.

    iii.   Failure to provide a Canadian residential address will result in disqualification from the bursary.

12. Program Oversight

AUSU conducts an annual review of the program, in alignment with POL-006: Program Evaluation. Reviews assess application trends, support distribution, and program impact. AUSU may publish summary findings as part of student services reporting.

13. Program Suspension or Modification

AUSU may suspend, modify, or discontinue the program at any time by Council resolution.

14. Policy Responsibility

Council is the sole authority to approve, amend, or rescind this policy.

15. Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

a. References:

This Policy References: POL-006: Program Evaluation
This Policy is Referenced by: None

b. Policy History:

- Original Approval Date: January 22, 2026
- Last Review Date: January 22, 2026
- Review by Date: July 2029