



Information Sheet: INAC Post-Secondary Education  
National Program Guidelines (2003)

**CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION  
Program Eligibility  
INAC BC Region Post-Secondary Student Support Program Funding**

Co-operative education is offered at many post-secondary institutions and involves a program where a student attends classes (a study period) for part of the year and is then employed in an occupation related to their field of study (a work period) for part of the year. Students must be enrolled in a specific co-operative education program and will generally be required to pay tuition and other fees, including for the work period.

The post-secondary institutions organize the co-operative education work opportunities. Although the student is required to be successful in the job interview, the learning aspect of the work period may be regulated by the institution and may include report writing or other assignments, including workshops on workplace ethics, resume writing and interview skills, for example.

**If an institution is offering a co-operative education program for credit toward an eligible program<sup>1</sup> (see below), the required tuition, fees, books and supplies would be an eligible expense under the *INAC Post-Secondary Education National Program Guidelines (2003)* (“the INAC guidelines”).** Living allowance and travel would also be eligible expenses, when a student is considered a full-time student, as defined by the institution, while completing a co-operative education program, including during work periods.

Some programs of study at some institutions will have mandatory co-operative education programs (eg. engineering, business, health sciences) while in other programs of study it will be optional.

**Post-Secondary Education National Program Guidelines Support Limits**

The INAC guidelines describe that full support (including living allowance and travel) may be provided for one program at each level (certificate/diploma, undergraduate and graduate). The time limit for that support matches “the official length of the program, as defined by the institution”. In cases where a student is enrolled in a co-operative education program, the “official program length” may

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<sup>1</sup> Under the INAC guidelines, Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), eligible programs are “offered by a post-secondary institution that includes at least one academic year in length (as defined by the institution), and for which completion of secondary school studies, or its equivalent as recognized by the post-secondary institution, is required”.



exceed the length of the same program of study where co-operative education is not included. As long as the other limits within the guidelines are followed (for example the maximum total assistance of \$35,000 per year for undergraduate students), this does not go beyond the policy limits. (In other words, a student enrolled in a degree program that includes cooperative education may be eligible for 5 years of funding while a student who is enrolled in a regular bachelor degree program would be eligible for 4 years of funding.)

### **Work/ Study and Income Issues**

The INAC guidelines are silent on how much income a student may earn while enrolled in classes or between semesters/ periods of study. Most co-operative education programs will involve a combination of study periods and paid work periods. A First Nation Administering Authority may wish to develop their own guidelines around student income levels; for example, whether they are eligible for a living allowance while employed (whether through a co-operative education program, or otherwise) or how much income a student may earn before their support level is reduced.

### **File Management/ Records**

Student files should include documentation of the co-operative education program and its relationship to the program of study. A record of required expenses and credits obtained should also be kept.

Please refer to INAC's *Education Programs and Services Handbook (2005)*, including the First Nations Education Steering Committee *First Nations Post-Secondary Education Handbook for BC Region (2005)*, for more detailed information on program guidelines and file management.

### **Scenario 1**

A student is enrolled in a Bachelor of Science degree. She is also enrolled in the cooperative education program at her school, which considers her to be a full-time student while in classes and during her work periods. The total length of her program in this case is 4 years – 2 semesters each year of classes and 1 semester of employment under the cooperative education program. This student is eligible under the INAC guidelines for full support, including living allowance, tuition, books and supplies for each month of the 4 years. Her Band may wish to limit her living allowance funding during her work period, however, as she will be paid (full-time) to work in a lab or for doing field work. Income guidelines for working students should be laid out in the Band's Post-Secondary policy, including where students are enrolled in cooperative education and are still considered a full-time student.



## Scenario 2

A student is enrolled in a Technical Diploma. He is also enrolled in the cooperative education program at his school. In this case, his school does not consider him a full-time student during work periods. The total program length is 3 years (2 years of classes and two 6-month work periods). This student is eligible under the INAC guidelines for full support while in classes but only as a part-time student during work periods. This means that his tuition, books and supplies for the work term are eligible expenses, but not a living allowance. The Band may wish to consider his earned income from the work-period in calculating his support level.

Please contact INAC, BC Region at **(604) 775-5100** for additional clarity around INAC funding and cooperative education, if required.