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**POLICY PAPER**

***Ancillary Fees***

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**Introduction**

In addition to the demands of high tuition fees, McMaster students also pay several ancillary fees annually. Ancillary fees are defined as “a fee imposed or administered by a given institution, or one of its constituent parts or its federated or affiliated institutions, in addition to regular tuition fees, which a student pays for a service or product”. It is important to consider the role that the regulation and transparency of ancillary fees plays in the financial accessibility of post-secondary education.

This paper will investigate the accessibility and equity of resources provided by student ancillary fees, as well as transparency regarding the usage of funds from ancillary fees. In this paper, we will be focusing on fees paid for Athletics and Recreation, residence and meal plan fees, faculty society fees, and transparency regarding the ancillary fees on campus. More detailed information regarding the ancillary fees McMaster students pay can be found here: <https://registrar.mcmaster.ca/supplementary-fees/>. In order to ensure our policy recommendations were informed in collaboration with stakeholders and that the needs of students were at the forefront of our work, we conducted student and staff consultations with the departments responsible for regulating and charging the ancillary fees, as well as open consultations with McMaster students. The recommendations in this paper are focused on increasing transparency and accountability of ancillary fees to students, ensuring fair cost-sharing for student services, and ensuring equitable access to services provided by ancillary fees.

**Sub-section 1: Faculty Society Fees**

PCRs for Society and Support Fees

**Principle:** Student society fees should benefit all students who financially contribute to the program and are members of the society.

**Concern:** The majority of faculty society elections have low voter turnouts.

**Concern:** The percentage of students who vote in society elections indicates that students are disconnected to how their fees are being allocated and spent.

**Recommendation:** Society executives should incorporate student fees into their annual elections by explaining how much yearly fees are, how it contributes to the society and program budgets, and communicating how students can provide input throughout the year.

Each year, the MSU, faculty societies, and program societies follow processes to elect a new governing body for the next academic year. This procedure should be open to eligible students who pay fees towards the society’s budget. Although every full time student pays fees and has access to supports and resources on campus, the number of students who vote in faculty society elections is consistently low which suggests a divide between societies and the student body. Based on society voting results, 2.7% of eligible Social Sciences students, 3.6% of eligible Humanities students, 4.3% of eligible Engineering students, 5.8% of eligible Science students, 12% of eligible Commerce students, over 20% of Arts and Science students, and 33.6% of eligible Health Sciences students cast a ballot. This is concerning considering the number of students represented by faculty societies, as well as the expansive budgets of some societies. In order for students to not only feel more included and valued within their faculty and program, but also to provide transparent and accountable allocation of funds, faculty societies should consider creating, or more diligently upholding, bylaws and policies that explain how fees are spent and budgeted.

Society Fees for 2020/2021

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Society Fee | 2020/2021 |
| Arts and Science | $33.81 |
| Health Sciences | $27.87 |
| Science | $26.96 |
| Humanities | $12.50 |
| Social Sciences | $16.46 |
| Medical Radiation | $105.54 |
| Nursing | $18.00 |
| Engineering | $44.36 |
| Commerce | $47.54 |
| Average | $37.00 |
| Median | $27.87 |

**Principle:** Students should be able to provide feedback on the amount they pay towards society and support fees.

**Concern:** There is no clear way for students to communicate with their society and program about fees.

**Concern**: Societies are not obligated to hold elections for executive roles and voter turnout is incredibly low.

**Recommendation:** Societies should offer an input period where students can voice their concerns with the society fees amount (in accordance with inflation).

**Recommendation:** Program administration for each Faculty should ensure that Program fees are transparent so that students are fully aware of the services they pay for and contribute to.

**Recommendation:** Program administration should implement a process for student consultation when changing their fees beyond the rate of inflation.

**Recommendation:** Societies should prioritize their annual elections by sending out information, offering opportunities for feedback and constructive criticism, and critically evaluating how to increase voting.

In continuation with the previous PCR, another valuable method to increase student engagement with faculty societies, as well as allow for further accountability for student fee spending would be to provide an opportunity for feedback. To allow for constructive criticism and remarks, each faculty society should consider providing an opportunity for feedback during a specific time frame, ideally before the new executive body is determined. Although some faculties have offered surveys and input sections on their websites, it would be beneficial to have a clear understanding of problem areas as well as areas to be commended prior to presenting year plans. In the future, it would be ideal for students to be able to offer feedback and evaluate how their fees are being used and be a part of the process to determine fees.

**Principle:** Students should be able to access records from their society and program to compare fees, budgets, and other financial components.

**Concern:** There is a lack of historic records kept by societies to track rising expenses and the growing pressure on students to support society initiatives.

**Recommendation:** Societies should maintain accurate records that display how finances are managed, fees are utilized, and how fees change from year to year.

**Recommendation:** Each Faculty should make reasonable efforts to improve financial transparency through consultation and collaboration with students.

To provide the student body with a clear understanding of how their fees are allocated, encourage students to engage with societies, and provide constructive budget feedback, the faculty societies should consider publishing their proposed budget for the year in September. This allows for students to connect their fees to the resources and supports they utilize and consider potential changes to the budget. This would allow for students to understand the costs associated with operating a society but also allows for students to offer input and share ideas for new or different services. Currently, only the McMaster Science Society, McMaster University Nursing Students Society, and the McMaster Engineering Society have the 2020/2021 budget available on their websites. The consistent uploading and sharing of documents like the budget, and also minutes, is critical for the student body to engage and feel included with decisions in regards to their fees.

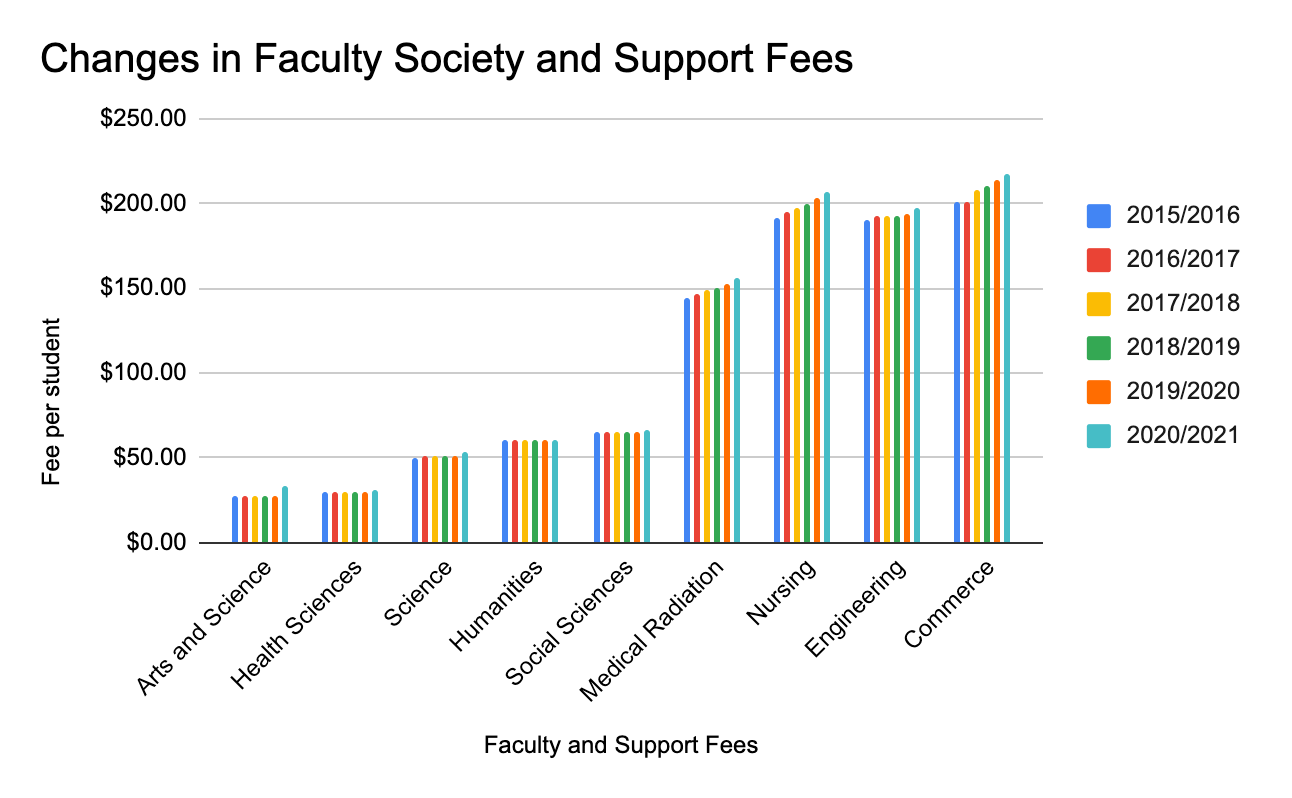
**Detailed Breakdown of Faculty Society Fees**

Faculty Specific Society and Support Fees in 2016 and 2020

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Faculty/Program | 2016 Fee | 2020 Fee |
| Arts and Science | $28.11 | $33.81 |
| Commerce | $200.00 | $217.23 |
| Engineering | $190.01 | $196.97 |
| Health Sciences | $30.00 | $30.69 |
| Humanities | $60.00 | $60.00 |
| Medical Radiation Science | $143.25 | $156.21 |
| Nursing | $189.92 | $206.86 |
| Science | $50.00 | $53.38 |
| Social Sciences | $65.60 | 66.12 |

Changes in fees from 2016 Ancillary Fees Policy Paper

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Faculty/Program | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 |
| Arts and Science | $28.11 | $28.11 | $28.11 | $28.11 | $28.11 | $33.81 |
| Health Sciences | $30.00 | $30.00 | $30.00 | $30.00 | $30.00 | $30.69 |
| Science | $50.00 | $50.60 | $51.21 | $51.21 | $51.65 | $53.38 |
| Humanities | $60.00 | $60.00 | $60.00 | $60.00 | $60.00 | $60.00 |
| Social Sciences | $65.76 | 65.76 | 65.76 | 65.76 | 65.76 | 66.12 |
| Medical Radiation | $144.18 | $147.04 | $148.81 | $150.57 | $152.70 | $156.21 |
| Nursing | $191.46 | $195.19 | $197.10 | $200.00 | $203.39 | $206.86 |
| Engineering | $190.01 | $192.17 | $192.19 | $192.17 | $193.74 | $196.97 |
| Commerce | $200.00 | $200.40 | $207.90 | $210.24 | $213.30 | $217.23 |



Changes to fees between 2015/2016 up to 2019/2020

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Faculty/Program | 2015/2016-2016/2017 | 2016/2017-2017/2018 | 2017/2018-2018/2019 | 2018/2019-2019/2020 | 2019/2020-2020/2021 |
| Arts and Science | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 16.9% |
| Health Sciences | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 2.2% |
| Science | 1.2% | 1.2% | 0.0% | 0.9% | 3.2% |
| Humanities | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Social Sciences | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| Medical Radiation | 1.9% | 1.2% | 1.2% | 1.4% | 2.2% |
| Nursing | 1.9% | 1.0% | 1.5% | 1.7% | 1.7% |
| Engineering | 1.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.8% | 1.6% |
| Commerce | 0.2% | 3.6% | 1.1% | 1.4% | 1.8% |

**Sub-section 2: Residence Fees**

**Principle:**Students should be able to borrow a lock out key when they are locked out of residence without worrying about a short time constraint to return it.

**Principle:** Students should not be financially penalized for circumstances outside of their control, such as not being able to travel a physical distance in a given amount of time.

**Concern:**Returning the borrowed lockout key in 20 minutes is unreasonable for students with accessibility needs or those whose rooms are far from their service desks.

**Recommendation:**Student residence should grant students with more time – at least 1 hour - to return the borrowed lock out keys.

The House and Conference Services should grant students with a longer time to return the borrowed key when they lose their keys.

Currently, the Housing and Conference Services require students who borrow the lost key to return the key in 20 minutes. Failure to do so is subject to a minimum charge of $25. This penalty fee has its own flaws. Firstly, it fails to consider students with certain disabilities. It takes extra time for those students to return the keys. Secondly, setting up a scheduled time with the purpose of preventing deferred time for returning the key is reasonable; however, such a short period of time is unjustified since some accidence or incidence can delay the return causing a financial burden on students.

Students should not be penalized financially for not returning the borrowed lost key under 20 minutes. The Housing and Conference Service should extend the returning period to one hour to accommodate students’ condition.

**Principle**: Students living on residence should not be charged additional fees for services on residence.

**Concern**: Students living on residence are being charged high fees each time they wash a load of laundry.

**Recommendation**: Student residence should eliminate the fees associated with doing laundry on residence.

McMaster students currently pay a minimum of $3.10 for each load of laundry they do. This fee is in addition to the minimum $8,700 that they pay for residence on campus. Doing laundry is an essential aspect of living on campus, and having to pay separate fees in order to wash and dry their clothes should not be a concern for students.

In addition, the cost of maintaining the washers and dryers in residence facilities is, in theory, far less than the cost of all students living in residence paying a minimum $3.10 charge each time they wish to use the laundry machine. This cost may be distributed among all students living in residence or added on to the residence fee instead of being charged separately.

**Principle:** Students should be able to get their money back for services they paid for but will no longer be able to use when they move out of residence.

**Concern:** Currently, students cannot receive a refund for the amounts remaining on their laundry cards at the end of the year.

**Recommendation:** Students should be able to receive a refund for additional amounts remaining on their laundry cards when they move out of residence. McMaster should increase awareness of the availability of refunds from Coinamatic, the company which issues laundry cards or create their own refund process.

Currently, students living in residence at McMaster must reload a laundry card with funds in order to be able to pay to use the laundry machines. In our consultations, we heard from several students that they had money left over on their laundry cards at the end of the year. The company which issues the laundry cards, Coinamatic, has a refund process individuals can use, however very few students are aware of this, resulting in many students losing the money on their laundry cards each year. Though the amounts remaining on the cards may be negligible, it is important for students to have autonomy over their money and be aware of the tools and supports available to them. Therefore, McMaster should increase awareness of the possibility of refunds on laundry cards. This could be possible through communication by residence staff to students, or campaigns by other bodies on campus such as MSU Spark or First Year Council.

**Sub-section 3: Athletics and Recreation**

**Principle**: The full time and part time undergraduate and graduate students should pay proportional athletics and recreation fees as they are paying for the same service.

**Concern**: Despite the use of the David Braley Athletic Center by full-time and part-time undergraduate and graduate students, part-time undergraduate and full time and part-time graduate students are paying significantly less than full-time undergraduate students on the building fee.

**Concern**: Part time undergraduate students do not pay the University Athletics and Recreation Activity Fee while other students pay for this fee.

**Recommendation**: The University should consider adjusting the Activities and Building Fees to ensure that contributions from full-time undergraduate students, part-time undergraduate students, and graduate students are equitable and reasonable dependent on their course loads.

Within one academic year, full time undergraduate students with a full course load of maximum 30 units contribute a fee of $150 to Athletics & Recreation Sports complex building in contrast, part time undergraduate students contribute $30.7. Full time and part time graduate students contribute $39.6. Similarly, full time undergraduate students pay $188.09 to University Athletics and Recreation Activity Fee, while part time undergraduate students are exempted from this fee, and full time and part time graduate students pay $169.63 and $84.84, respectively. Since the David Braley Athletic Centre is open to the entire community, it is unreasonable to leave the costs substantially on full time undergraduate students.

The MSU recommends that McMaster University should adjust the fees according to the frequencies of use by different student groups to ensure that the fee proportions are reasonable and equitable.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Fall 2020 | Winter 2021 | Spring 2021 |
| Full time undergraduate | Athletics & Recreation Sports Complex Building (per unit to maximum 30 units): | $150 | N/A | N/A |
| University Athletics and Recreation Activity Fee | $188.09 |
| Part time undergraduate | Athletics & Recreation Sports Complex Building (1 – 17 units, per unit) | $19.38 | $5.64 | $5.64 |
| Full time graduate | Athletics & Recreation Sports Complex Building (per term) | $13.19 | $13.19 | $13.19 |
| Student Athletics & Recreation | $72.70 | $64.62 | $32.31 |
| Part time graduate | Athletics & Recreation Sports Complex Building (per term) | $13.19 | $13.19 | $13.19 |
| Student Athletics & Recreation | $36.36 | $32.32 | $16.16 |

**Hospitality Services**

**Principle:** If individuals are paying the same amount for a service, they should have equal access to the service.

**Concern:** Students with dietary restrictions have limited options for accessing food on campus, hence rendering them unable to equally access on-campus eateries.

**Recommendation:** On-campus eateries should provide affordable meal options which accommodate dietary restrictions or allow students to opt out of meal plans.

Based on student consultations, individuals with dietary restrictions felt that they had minimal access to appropriate, affordable meal options at eateries on campus. Specifically, individuals who were vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free or had nut allergies claimed there were few meal options available to them at campus eateries, and that the options available were at times priced higher than foods which did not accommodate for their dietary restrictions.

For students with a meal plan, campus eateries are their primary source of food, and since meal plans are mandatory for all individuals living in residence, campus eateries must be able to provide accessible meals for any student with a meal plan, regardless of their dietary restrictions. Having few options means students would have to repeatedly consume the same meals which, over the course of the eight month school year, would be less than ideal. Dietary restrictions should be taken into account when campus eateries plan their menus in a manner which ensures they will not just have options, but enough options to ensure they do not feel limited.

**Principle:** An individual’s main food source should be financially accessible to them.

**Concern:** Most meals on campus are comparable prices to restaurants, which seems exorbitant particularly when considering most residences are not fully equipped for students to cook and therefore most students would not have other food options on campus.

**Recommendation:** Campus eateries should consider offering lower priced meals, or collaborating with Housing and Conference Services to ensure residences have equipped kitchens.

Students surveyed were concerned that meals on campus had similar prices to those of restaurants or food courts. The reason this was a concern was that, for students with a meal plan, on-campus eateries serve as their primary food source. Though the cost of labour and ingredients may be similar to off-campus eateries, the fact that many students with meal plans solely consume their meals on campus leads students to believe prices of meals should be reduced to accommodate for this fact. An individual’s primary food source should be financially accessible to them, and the costs of meals at many campus eateries mean that this is not the case for all students. Thus, campus eateries should either reduce their fees. Alternatively, Hospitality Services could collaborate with McMaster Housing and Conference Services in order to ensure each residence is equipped with full kitchens so that individuals living on campus have alternative food production methods.

**Sub-section 5: Payment Plan Fees by Sneha Wadhwani**

**Principle:** Fees for usage of the payment plan or late payment of tuition should be applied under transparent and reasonable circumstances.

**Concern:** There is a lack of transparency regarding the purpose and justification for the amount of compulsory fees for the usage of the payment plan and late payment.

**Recommendation:** The University Fees Committee and Office of the Registrar should clearly communicate the purpose and justification of the amount for late payment fees and fees for usage of the payment plan option to students through their website, Mosaic, and social media or eliminate the interest charged.

Individuals who opt to use the payment plan for their tuition fees face a penalty of $80/term[[1]](#footnote-2). The payment plan was designed to alleviate financial stress from students in order to provide them with an option to pay their tuition over a longer period as opposed to all at once, according to the Office of the Registrar website. However, there is no information on the website regarding why there is an additional fee for students who opt to use the payment plan. When our research team inquired to staff about the purpose of this fee, we were unable to receive a clear response. Since the intention of the payment plan was to reduce financial burden on students, the Office of the Registrar should either provide clarity regarding the purpose of this additional fee or eliminate it.

**Increased transparency regarding spending within each Supplementary Fee**

**Principle:** The specific uses and implementations of all student supplementary fees collected by McMaster University should be made publicly available and displayed in a transparent manner.   
**Concern:** It is not clearly communicated to students how McMaster supplementary fees are allocated.

**Recommendation:** McMaster University should clearly communicate to students how the supplementary fees received by various departments plan are allocated for each financial year.

Students pay a variety of ancillary fees which function to provide valuable services that enrich the student experience greatly. These fees range from fees for services offered by the MSU, to those which supply adjacent student groups (Marching Band, Solar Car), as well as McMaster’s many services. For the 2020-2021 Academic year, students taking 30 units of course load paid a total of $421.14 of fees to the MSU, $568.89 of fees to McMaster, and $6.72 of fees to MSU and McMaster-affiliated student groups. This is a total of $996.75 and does not account for separate Faculty Society fees.

This is a significant sum of money, representing approximately 15% of annual McMaster tuition for domestic students. Reporting regarding how funds are spent or even plan to be spent by the university is lacking. The MSU and the following student groups; McMaster Marching Band, Ontario Public Interest Research Group, Mac Solar Car, Engineers Without Borders, Incite Magazine, all have reporting mechanisms which clearly define how student funds are planned to be spent and what the actual funding amounts to.

Regarding the MSU, the institution defines spending in all of its various arenas in a myriad of equitable ways. All MSU Services, the Health and Dental Insurance Plans, CFMU-FM, and other MSU expenses are budgeted in the annual MSU budget submissions. This document is prepared, posted on the MSU website, debated within the Student Representative Assembly, and is freely able to be critiqued by the greater student body. The documents clearly outline how all branches of the MSU will spend the funds received, with monthly updates given by services which are posted publicly to showcase how money is being spent. CFMU-FM Inc. and the MSU release yearly, audited financial statements which define their entire spending practises in the previous financial year to verify the efficacy of documents posted throughout the previous year. The fee regarding the HSR Bus Pass is clearly defined as a specific function which fulfills a goal for McMaster funding, making its direct purpose for students self-evident.

The five mentioned external student groups also present their budgets in an open forum to the SRA while also posting documents on publicly accessible websites. These external groups update the MSU on a semesterly basis regarding their spending to ensure the student body is informed of developments.

Regarding the $568.89 paid by students to McMaster University through supplementary fees, there is far less clarity regarding how monies are spent. Students are simply informed of which McMaster department receives the funds (e.g., Student Wellness Centre, Athletics and Recreation). No clarity regarding how that money is spent is given in any publicly availably financial reporting, such as McMaster’s annual organization-level Financial Report. An outline of how allocated funds are divided to supply the services of the departments, what proportion is set aside for employee wages, benefits, pensions, associated facility upkeep, insurance, and the myriad of other expenses would help alleviate student concerns regarding lack of transparency.

Case-in-point, if more information about the above and other parameters were given regarding the $188.09 fee for Athletics and Recreation, students would have greater peace of mind in relation to their fees as well as greater trust within the university. Ensuring student trust through transparency is vital, especially during the strenuous financial situation posed on all parties during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**COVID-19 and Virtual Learning Environments**

**Principle:** Students should not be paying fees for services they are not using, or are using significantly less, due to most classes currently being online.

**Concern**: This academic year, students were still charged the full cost of the Athletics and Recreation fee despite not being able to access the facilities.

**Recommendation:** McMaster University must ensure that while classes are online due to COVID-19, the ancillary fees it charges students are fair and take into consideration the altered usage and accessibility of online services.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the vast majority of McMaster students studying online, and many of the facilities on campus being closed. However, students are still being charged the full Athletics and Recreation Fee, despite the David Braley Athletic Centre being closed. Though some Athletics and Recreation services, such as online fitness classes, remain open, we feel that these services do not warrant charging the full Athletics and Recreation fee. The financial impact of the pandemic on students further fortifies the necessity of taking student needs into consideration when deciding ancillary fee amounts, particularly given the closure of campus.

**Policy Statement**

Whereas: Student society fees should benefit all students who financially contribute to the program and are members of the society.

Whereas: Students should be able to provide feedback on the amount they pay towards society and support fees.

Whereas: Students should be able to access records from their society and program to compare fees, budgets, and other financial components.

Whereas: Students should be able to borrow a lock out key when they are locked out of residence without worrying about a short time constraint to return it.

Whereas: Students should not be financially penalized for circumstances outside of their control, such as not being able to travel a physical distance in a given amount of time.

Whereas: Students living on residence should not be charged additional fees for services on residence.

Whereas: Students should be able to get their money back for services they paid for but will no longer be able to use when they move out of residence.

Whereas: The full time and part time undergraduate and graduate students should pay proportional athletics and recreation fees as they are paying for the same service.

Whereas: If individuals are paying the same amount for a service, they should have equal access to the service.

Whereas: An individual’s main food source should be financially accessible to them.

Whereas: Fees for usage of the payment plan or late payment of tuition should be applied under transparent and reasonable circumstances.

Whereas: The specific uses and implementations of all student supplementary fees collected by McMaster University should be made publicly available and displayed in a transparent manner.

Whereas: Students should not be paying fees for services they are not using, or are using significantly less, due to most classes currently being online.

Be it Resolved That: Society executives should incorporate student fees into their annual elections by explaining how much yearly fees are, how it contributes to the society and program budgets, and communicating how students can provide input throughout the year.

Be it Resolved That: Societies should offer an input period where students can voice their concerns with the society fees amount (in accordance with inflation).

Be it Resolved That: Program administration for each Faculty should ensure that Program fees are transparent so that students are fully aware of the services they pay for and contribute to.

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Be it Resolved That: Students should be able to receive a refund for additional amounts remaining on their laundry cards when they move out of residence. McMaster should increase awareness of the availability of refunds from Coinamatic, the company which issues laundry cards or create their own refund process.

Be it Resolved That: The University should consider adjusting the Activities and Building Fees to ensure that contributions from full-time undergraduate students, part-time undergraduate students, and graduate students are equitable and reasonable dependent on their course loads.

Be it Resolved That: On-campus eateries should prioritize affordable meal options which accommodate dietary restrictions, or allow students to opt out of meal plans.

Be it Resolved That: Campus eateries should consider offering lower priced meals or collaborating with Housing and Conference Services to ensure residences have equipped kitchens.

Be it Resolved That: The University Fees Committee and Office of the Registrar should clearly communicate the purpose and justification of the amount for late payment fees and fees for usage of the payment plan option to students through their website, Mosaic, and social media or eliminate the interest charged.

Be it Resolved That: McMaster University should clearly communicate to students how the supplementary fees received by various departments plan are allocated after the financial year.

Be it Resolved That: McMaster University must ensure that while classes are online due to COVID-19, the ancillary fees it charges students are fair and take into consideration the altered usage and accessibility of online services.

# **Appendix 1: Faculty Society Fees Overview**

# Overview

The McMaster undergraduate student body is predominantly broken down into six faculties; Commerce, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, Science, Social Sciences, one program; Arts and Science, and two Collaboratives; Nursing and Medical Radiation. The size of these entities varies from approximately 250 students in Arts and Science to over 7,000 in Science. One-way resources and supports are provided to the student body is through faculty societies which are run by an executive team who handle finances, plan social events, provide academic and professional support, and in some cases allocate funds to smaller department societies. Another way the student experience is enhanced is through cooperative education, collaboratives, and a variety of other resources and supports offered through each Faculty. With COVID-19 providing a barrier to in-person involvement, there has been an endless array of interactive online events planned for the school year, however even throughout previous in-person school years, attendance can be limited. Each individual student is required to pay society and support fees which contribute to the society’s budget and the Faculty’s ability to provide the aforementioned services. This section will explore whether students feel supported by their Faculty and society and how their fee contributes to the university experience.

Arts and Science

The Faculty of Arts and Science provides support and resources for a population of approximately 272 students (2019) and charges students a fee for the Society of Arts and Science Students (SASS). This fee goes towards social events, a mentorship program, and academic resources. Since 2016, the SASS has only increased their fee once, at the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year, from $28.11 to $33.81. This is an increase of 16.9% in one year, yet the fee remains one of the most affordable compared to the other faculty and support fees, however in order to increase the fee beyond the annual CPI (2.2% in 2019), SASS was required to hold a referendum, as per their constitution. The increase of $3 was put forth to Arts and Science students in 2019 through an election with the option to increase the fee only by inflation, by $3, or by $5, with at least 20% of SASS voting in favour of one option. The Society of Arts and Science Students proposed the increase to offer a bursary providing more financial accessibility to students with the $3 increase option providing a $500 bursary and the $5 increase option providing a $1,000 bursary. By raising the society fee, the society was able to operate using a budget of approximately $9,000.

Based on the information provided on the Society of Arts and Science Students website, as per their 2019 financial documents and contingency plan, events like Formal and Kaffeehaus are subsidized and the Student Ideas Fund offers support for events like the ArtSci Musical. The budget for the 2019/2020 year and the 2020/2021 year are not available and meeting minutes have been posted once for the 2020/2021 academic year. The Society of Arts and Science Students requires a quorum of 20% for general meetings, which applies to meetings where the new Executive team will be elected.

Health Sciences

The Bachelor of Health Sciences Society (BHSS) is another relatively small society that provides essential services like social events and academic support to just over 1,000 students. Similar to Arts and Science, the fee for the program remained unchanged for a number of years until the 2019/2020 school year when there was a 2.2% increase which translates into a raise from $30 to $30.69 per student. The Health Sciences fee became the most affordable in this study and with the fees collected, the program and society offered a variety of events for interyear engagements, mental health, and course reviews on the society website. The society operates on the fees collected from students totaling just under $30,000. The meeting minutes and financial documents available on the BHSS website are only available up to the end of the 2019/2020 school year and the Executive team election results were not posted. The 2019/2020 budget indicated there was over $2,000 allocated to the social budget, $75 allocated to academics, and $8,000 dedicated to proposals for student clubs and initiatives like the Health Sciences Musical ($2,300), McMaster Kids 4 Kids ($50), and MSU Spark ($113).

Separate from the society, Health Sciences are expected to also pay for a peer tutoring network ($2.29), health and wellness ($0.53), as well as coop admin fees ($150), and coop placement fee for BioPharm students ($866.67 per work term).

Science

The McMaster Faculty of Science has consistently opted to increase program fees within the range of inflation, however for the 2020/2021 year, the program opted to increase fees by 3.2% which is higher than the 2.3% 2018 average CPI that has guided other faculties when proposing higher fees. This increase in program fees resulted in a shift from $51.65 to $53.38 to provide an operating budget of over $400,000.

The McMaster Science Society (MSS) offers services and support to over 7,500 science students through grants ($9,400), tutoring services, and funding for 13 program societies ($30,000), as well as the McMaster Kinesiology Society ($8,200). The MSS budget relies on the $26.96 per student, totaling around $209,500, to offer their annual event, Formaldehyde, a mentorship program, and art events while utilizing their large team to offer numerous policies, the current budget, but have not provided updated meeting minutes since September of 2020. Although the Faculty of Science has over 7,500 undergraduate students, only 431 (5.8%) students voted in the most recent election for the current President who ran unopposed and won 88% of the votes (11.6% voted “no confidence”).

Unique from the society fee charged to each student, science student fees include a fee for Career and Coop Education ($26.42), Coop Admin ($150), and Coop Placement ($650 per work term).

Humanities

The McMaster Faculty of Humanities has not changed their fee since the last MSU Ancillary Fee paper completed in 2016. Using the $60 charged to each of the approximately 1,100 humanities undergraduate students, the program allocates $12.50 per student to the McMaster Humanities Society (MHS), resulting in a budget of almost $28,000. The MHS uses this budget to offer academic and social events ($28,250), as well as providing funding for 13 program societies, and a student initiative fund. The revenue of the MHS, similar to all other faculty and support society’s, is based on student fees totaling approximately $130,000. The VP Finance, who is primarily responsible for managing society expenses was elected through a vote where 80 of the 2225 (3.6%) students represented voted. The financial statements/budget for 2020/2021 and meeting minutes beyond September 2020 are unavailable through the society’s website.

Distinct from the MHS, students from the faculty are charged $35 for Academic Support and Career Services.

Social Sciences

The McMaster Faculty of Social Sciences fee increased once between the current academic year, 2020/2021, and the last Ancillary Fees paper in 2016. From the 2019/2020 fee of $65.76 to the 2020/2021 fee of $66.12, there was an increase of .5% which contributed to the programs operating budget of approximately $260,000. This budget is used to support the McMaster Social Sciences Society who collect $16.46 per student for a budget of approximately $65,000. This budget is dispersed among 11 program societies ($7,700), and provides wellness services, social events, scholarships, and a mentorship program. The society relies predominantly on student fees however the fee remains below average ($37) for 2020/2021 fees. The current financial documents and the 2020/2021 budget of the MSSS are not available for review however meeting minutes are available. In the MSSS 2020 election, the President won 107 votes in favour (2.7%) with 45 abstaining (30% of voters) from the 152 undergraduate students who voted out of the 3969 eligible voters. The year plan of the current President is unavailable as is the year plan for the current VP Finance.

Beyond the society fee, each social science student is charged $50 for the Experiential Education Initiative.

Medical Radiation

The Medical Radiation program exists within the McMaster Faculty of Science and has a student society. The Medical Radiation Collaborative charges $105.54, as well as fees to the McMaster Science Society ($26.96) and Science Career and Cooperative Education ($26.42). The fees associated with this program have risen by at least 1.2% each year and has maintained its position as one of the most expensive program fees.

Nursing

The McMaster Faculty of Nursing has had one of the most expensive fees for students for multiple years. Each year since 2016, the fee has increased by at least 1.2% with a maximum increase of 1.9% in 2016 and reached $206.86 in 2020. Although this fee is significantly above both the average and median, the program funds the McMaster University Nursing Students Society (MUNSS) with $18 per student to provide a budget of $34,074 (from McMaster). MUNSS offers awards, career resources and mentorship, as well as conferences, and NCLEX reviews. The 2020/2021 budget indicated that expected revenue was $98,320 and expenses were $97,490. This is supported by the almost $390,000 paid in fees by nursing students. The MUNSS website provides both budgets and minutes for the three groups affiliated (McMaster, Conestoga, and Mohawk) however clear election results were not readily available.

Separate from the fees allocated to MUNSS, the program requires students to pay a fee for the Nursing Collaborative ($105.54), Graduation Pinning Ceremony ($2), and Learning Resources ($173.08).

Engineering

The McMaster Faculty of Engineering represents one of McMaster’s largest student bodies with over 6,000 undergraduate students. The $196.97 per student charged by the program includes fees given to the McMaster Engineering Society (MES) that are further broken down into three categories as Academic ($0.90), Wellness ($0.25), and Student Fees ($44.36). The Engineering Coop and Career Services fee ($45) is also charged through MES and is later transferred; however, this fee does not contribute to the society. This budget amounts to around $295,000 annually which is further divided to support over 20 groups and teams ($86,000), department clubs ($8,400), and social events like the Fireball and Kipling Formal. One point to note is that MES collects interest from its $20,000 of long-term investments ($800), advertising ($20,000), and sponsorships ($500) which most other societies do not do. In the 2020 election, 276 students cast a ballot, representing 4.3% of eligible voters, to determine the executive roles.

Distinct from the MES, engineering students are also obligated to pay a variety of fees, including the Hatch Center for Experiential Learning ($50), MacLAB ($50), Coop Admin ($100), Work Term fee ($300) and New Employer fee ($125). This is the third highest program fee at McMaster.

Commerce

The McMaster Faculty of Commerce provides support and resources for just over 3,000 students. The Commerce fees are the most expensive at McMaster and go toward supporting the DeGroote Commerce Society (DCS), career development, and the trading floor. From the $217.23 fee from each student, the DCS collects $49.54 to provide two formals ($28,000), 8 clubs ($15,500) and conferences ($9,500). The society collects revenue from similar sources as other societies on campus, for instance student fees and Welcome Week, however the DCS also collects revenue from the sponsorships listed on the website like Fujifilm, KPMG, and CIBC Capital Markets, resulting in an additional $5,000. Additionally, the DCS collects revenue from JDC Central ($25,000) and merchandise ($2,000) which grants them a budget that is considerably larger than many other societies. The 2019/2020 budget is available on the website; however, minutes are not. In the 2020 election, the President was elected based on 387 votes (12%) from 3215 eligible voters, with 54.8% of the total votes.

Beyond the fees collected by the DCS, Commerce students are expected to pay for fees including the Allan Gould Trading Floor ($15 per term), and Business Career Development ($137.69).

1. “Payment Plan” <https://registrar.mcmaster.ca/payment-plan/>. Accessed March 15th 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)