

| | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Subject: BCIT Nursing Program and Parental Leaves | Policy Number: EXT-11 | Last reviewed: 2023 Dec. 4 |
| Approved by: Council | Managed by: Advocacy & Policy Committee | Next review: 2025 Jan. 30 |

Policy Rationale:

This policy fundamentally establishes and promotes several objectives. Firstly, it helps to focus and articulate the Association's stance in reacting to the announcement that BCIT nursing students in Term 6 or earlier will no longer be able to receive the nursing bursary historically associated with the Term 9 preceptorship at BCIT. In conjunction with this specific priority, various general measures and stances are set out with respect to nursing enrolments.

An additional objective relates to concerns brought forth principally by female students in BCIT's nursing program: the absence of a BCIT policy relating to parental leave from one's studies. Briefly, these are decided on a case-by-case basis at best, but students who become pregnant are not guaranteed the opportunity to return to their program. Academic standards cannot be compromised and time away from school would need to be assessed in conjunction with a returning student's skillset. However, pregnancy and family status are matters disproportionately affecting female students, and this impacts female-dominated fields such as nursing.

Female-dominated professions and programs, such as nursing, are just as valuable to society as male-dominated professions and programs like apprenticeships and the skilled trades. Unreasonable barriers to access should be eliminated and policies should be implemented to promote equal access to post-secondary education for female students pursuing a career in female-dominated professions and fields of study.

External Policy Position:

1. The Student Association supports:
 - A. Investment by the Ministries of Health or of Post-Secondary Education & Future Skills in one-time emergency relief for BCIT nursing students impacted by the decision to sunset the preceptorship bursary, including through the use of any unspent departmental allocations for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024;
 - B. Ministries in the B.C. government re-assessing the unpaid nature of student labour in the health care system, specifically during clinical and preceptorships;
 - C. StudentAidBC reviewing its policies and practices to accommodate the fact that BCIT's intensive course load in the nursing program is acknowledged by students and faculty to make it more challenging to work an additional job between terms or during one's term;
 - D. A review by the federal and provincial government agencies responsible for student financial assistance of direct or indirect supports relating to the numerous out-of-pocket costs incurred by students in certain programs, including for the costs associated with buying scrubs, getting mandatory vaccines, travelling between hospitals, and parking at sites;

- E. Increased provision of incentives and training opportunities to get more mid-career health care professionals into nursing programs at BCIT and elsewhere;
 - F. Government policies and programs, in conjunction with health authorities and sectoral partners, to increase enrolments in BCIT's nursing programs, given demonstrable challenges over the years;
 - G. The Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills issuing a binding policy directive to post-secondary institutions in accordance with section 3(c) ministerial powers under the *College and Institute Act*, said directive to require that they refrain from discriminating against female students with respect to leaves and withdrawals; and
 - H. Institutional compliance with statutory duties under section 24(2)(b) of the *Act*, including an Education Council's legal obligation to establish policies concerning student withdrawal from courses, programs and institutions.
2. The Student Association opposes:
- A. The decision by the BC government and other sectoral partners to eliminate funding for the BCIT nursing preceptorship bursary without an adequate transition plan;
 - B. Decision-making processes at the governmental or institutional level which do not adequately consult or communicate with students directly affected by these decisions;
 - C. Any delays or gaps in the efficient implementation of health authorities hiring increasing numbers of BCIT students as Employed Student Nurses (ESN);
 - D. Any unreasonable barriers to growing the skilled workforce in BC's health care sector, whether created by government, professional bodies, health authorities, or other sectoral partners;
 - E. Any government or institutional policies which create unequal access to education for women; and
 - F. Any disregard by the Government or by post-secondary institutions for mandatory statutory duties imposed on institutions by legislation, regulation, or ministerial order.