SAUDI ARABIAN CULTURAL BUREAU
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia

KING ABDULLAH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
SELECTION, POLICIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

GUIDELINES FOR CANADIAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS
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The Education System in Saudi Arabia

Responsible Authority
The Council of Higher Education (CHE) is the governing body for all postsecondary, non-military education. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is the Head of the Council. To learn more about MOHE, visit www.mohe.gov.sa. The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) is the independent body responsible to the CHE and performs accreditation of all non-military, post-secondary institutions. The National Center for Assessment in Higher Education (NCAHE) helps to establish fairness and equality in the higher educational system of Saudi Arabia and improves the efficiency of its institutions. It has also established a highly specialized center in measurement and testing and participates in the improvement of the selection process and the efficiency of learning.

Elementary & Intermediate Education
Elementary education lasts for six years (age level 6-12 years old) and leads to the General Elementary Education Certificate. Intermediate Education lasts for three years (age level 12-15) and it leads to the Intermediate School Certificate.

Secondary School
Secondary school education lasts for three years (ages 15-18) and leads to a high school diploma. The examination for the high school diploma is unified and held nationwide simultaneously. Saudi Arabian Secondary Schools either follow the Tawjihiyah or the recently implemented Credit System. Many Saudi institutions are adapting the new Credit System, which aims to make a quantum leap in secondary education and contributes to the achievement of the education policy in Saudi Arabia.

- **The Tawjihiyah**: With this model, students can choose between general secondary and technical schools after the intermediate level. In the first year of general secondary school, students share a common curriculum. At the end of this year, they are divided into the scientific and literary tracks for the final two years. Students obtaining a score of 60% and above in all the first year subjects may choose between the literary and scientific track. Students obtaining a score of less than 60% must opt for the literary track.

- **Credit System**: The credit system is a new structure based on an hourly system that allows students to combine two programs in a joint program. All students follow this system, which is divided into two tracks: Human Sciences and Natural Sciences. The study plan consists of compulsory and optional courses; each course is a five-hours and the student has a maximum of seven credits in each semester. The credit system is based on a grade point average which is calculated on the average of all grades of courses studied during a high school year. The academic credit system includes 200 hours of instructions consisting of the compulsory joint program (125hours), two specialty programs (65hours), and the optional program that consists of elective courses in different skills and disciplines (10hours). This system employs new strategies and provides the students with new learning methods, allowing students to develop their research and creative thinking skills. Additionally, this new structure helps students adapt to different learning resources and modern technology that will be useful in their practical life.

- **Secondary School Grading System**
100% Highest on Scale
90-100% Excellent
75-89% Very good
60-74% Good
50-59% Pass
0-49% Fail

Post-Secondary Grading Scale
A Bachelor’s Degree is conferred after four years, except in pharmacy and medicine, which require four years with additional training in the hospital, and Engineering and Veterinary Medicine, which require five years. A Master’s Degree is normally conferred after two years following the completion of a Bachelor’s Degree. Master’s degree requirements include course work and a dissertation/thesis. A Doctor of Philosophy, PhD, is normally conferred after three years of study following the completion of a Master’s and Bachelor’s degree.

Scale Used by Most* Saudi Post-Secondary Institutions

95 to 100 = 5.0 = A+ Excellent
90 to less than 95 = 4.75 = A Excellent
85 to less than 90 = 4.5 = B+ Very Good
80 to less than 85 = 4.0 = B Very Good
75 to less than 80 = 3.5 = C+ Good
70 to less than 75 = 3.0 = C Good
65 to less than 70 = 2.5 = D+ Pass
60 to less than 65 = 2.0 = D Pass
Less than 60 = 1.0 = F Fail

*Most Saudi universities adopt a 5.0 grading scale with the exception of a few who calculate out of 4.

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program

Application and Selection Process
Students awarded a King Abdullah Scholarship to pursue higher education abroad undergo a rigorous application and selection process. An announcement, delivered through local media outlets and the MOHE website, alerts prospective students that registration has begun. Scholarship applications are submitted via a link on MOHE’s website and each is scrupulously evaluated by a Ministry-appointed, independent scholarship program committee. The committee will do a merit-based screening and recommend a student based on his or her collective achievements in accordance with the number of available scholarships.

Applications are assessed using the following academic selection criteria. Bachelor’s students must have a secondary school grade above 90%, General Aptitude Test above 80%, Achievement Test above 80%, and Associate Degrees (2 year post-secondary diplomas) must have a minimum GPA of 4.5/5.00. Graduate level applicants must have achieved the aforementioned criteria, and Master’s students must additionally hold a Bachelor’s Degree with an overall GPA no less than 3.75/5.00 or equivalent, while
PhD students must hold a Master’s Degree with an overall GPA no less than ‘Very Good’ or equivalent. The committee must also conduct interviews with candidates prior to nomination.

Successful candidates are listed on the Ministry’s website and through major local media outlets, and the electronic files of all nominees are subsequently transferred to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau or Mission in the designated country of study. A Scholarship Students Forum is hosted annually in Riyadh, comprising of lectures and symposia and aimed at providing information for students about the designated countries in which they will undertake their academic studies. Once formalities are completed, students are awarded their scholarships during the Forum. Scholars then depart Saudi Arabia and arrive in their respective international study destination.

**Self-Sponsored Students:** Some Saudi students pursue their higher education abroad without scholarship funding. If a privately funded student receives an Academic Letter of Acceptance from a university of college he/she would then have completed 80% of the requirements for the enrollment into KASP. If the student meets all other requirements, his or her enrollment request will be sent to MOHE in Saudi Arabia and confirmation may take up to two weeks to process; however enrollment onto KASP is not guaranteed.

## KASP Students in Canada

### Funding Policy

The SACB provides financial support for each funded student, including tuition fees, living support, international student differential fees, health insurance fees, ancillary fees, laboratory/bench fees (graduate students only) and any other normally applied fees for each student. The SACB will provide a Sponsorship Authority Certification to the university for each student indicating the funded students’ name, total annual value of funding, scholarship duration (indicating an expiry date), and contact information for invoicing purposes.

**Length of Study for Academic Programs:** Undergraduate students receive four years of funding, while Master’s students receive two years of coverage and PhD students are funded for three years. Extensions may be granted in exceptional cases.

**Health Insurance:** All scholarship students receive 100% health insurance coverage via SACB for the duration of their studies in Canada and therefore should opt out of health coverage offered by the academic institution at which they are enrolled.

**Bench Fees:** The SACB can provide Bench Fees for KASP students in the amount of up to $5,000 for Master students and $10,000 for PhD students to cover the cost of consumable items used during their studies. Normally this process begins when a graduate-level scholarship student finds a potential supervisor. The chosen research university will provide SACB or the student with a proposal, on letterhead, detailing all items to be purchased (including cost per item) that is signed by the research supervisor, appropriate department chair or school director. The student must submit the request for approval through the Student Gate and it will be processed by the Bureau. The SACB will inform the student of the final decision through the Student Gate and, if approved, SACB will send a letter to the university acknowledging its receipt of the proposal and informing them of next steps. Upon receiving an invoice from the University, the Bureau releases the funds. Please note the university provides for indirect or overhead costs,
such as costs associated with facilities and basic utilities, the purchase and repair of office equipment, administration fees, insurance for equipment and research vehicles, basic communication devices such as telephones and fax machines, and computer software and terminals. The SACB is not responsible for funding expenditures or commitments by grantees that exceed grant funds applied to the grantees’ credit at the institution for current and prior fiscal periods.

Approved Schools and Academic Programs
The MOHE maintains a detailed list of all Universities and Colleges to which students are allowed to attend in all countries that KASP students are sent to. This list is based on careful scrutinization and research of how well the programs serve the purpose of the KASP students who are sent to study abroad. KASP students are permitted to register at Canadian institutions for academic programs that have been pre-approved by MOHE. Students are not permitted to enroll in certificate or diploma programs, online or distance-learning courses, or programs designed specifically for international students.

Release of Information
All sponsored students have signed and consented for SACB to enquire and obtain academic information on their behalf. The Consent Form, created by SACB’s Legal Department, declares that the student gives unconditional and irrevocable consent and direction to educational and medical agencies/associations, in which they are a member, to release information which the academic institution may possess or acquire in relation to the student, including all academic and other records, to SACB. The Consent Form, created by SACB’s Legal Department, aligns with Canada’s Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and is widely accepted by universities and colleges across Canada.

English Language Preparation
The KASP students who do not meet the language proficiency requirements are directed to be enrolled at a 12-month intensive ESL Program in which they are expected to receive a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 35 group instructed hours of ESL.

- Approved ESL Schools: The SACB’s ESL unit maintains a detailed list of all Canadian language schools at which KASP students are permitted to enroll.
- Length of Study: The KASP covers up to a 12-month ESL preparation period. The SACB will not fund additional ESL training except in exceptional circumstances to enable our students to achieve a sufficiently high level of academic language proficiency.

Student Documents
At the SACB, the Recognition and Authentication Department, as well as the Department of Academic Relations, has the authority to notarize official student documents (transcripts, certificates, etc) with a Cultural Bureau and Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher Education stamp (for SACB’s use only) for sending to Canadian Academic institutions. After documents are stamped, they are placed in sealed envelopes and sent to the concerned university to complete student applications.

Admissions Purposes Only Financial Guarantee Letter
If a student is funded by the scholarship program, the student will provide the academic institution with an Admissions Purposes Only Financial Guarantee (APO-FG) letter, issued by SACB to support a
scholarship student’s application and admission to a Canadian academic institution. This is an official letter from SACB, stating that upon admission to the degree program, SACB will pay the student’s registration, tuition, bench fees (if applicable), health insurance, and provide a monthly stipend. Universities and Colleges across Canada are encouraged to also accept Admissions Purposes Only FG letters issued by Saudi Universities or other Saudi governmental institutions, as it’s a confirmation that the applicant has been granted a scholarship by his/her employer or university. This letter differs from a Sponsorship Authority Certification or Financial Guarantee (FG).

Letters of Acceptance
Letters of acceptance extended to our sponsored students should be very clear on the conditions (if any), duration of the program as well as the Major the student will be specializing in.

Sponsorship Authority Certification/Financial Guarantee
Once the student receives acceptance to a Canadian institution, the SACB will issue a Sponsorship Authority Certification for each student, indicating that the SACB will be financially responsible for that student. Subsequently, once the student arrives to Canada and opens a file in SACB, his/her scholarship will be administered by the Bureau and an official sponsorship certification will be mailed out to the concerned university. Following each student’s arrival in Canada and throughout the validity period of each Sponsorship Authority Certification/FG, the Bureau agrees to pay, upon receipt of an original invoice issues in the respect of each student, that student’s registration, tuition and health fees, provided that the student remains active at the institution.

- The scholarship shall provide the student and his/her family members with a monthly stipend for living, clothing and books’ expenses as well as annual round trip air ticket(s).
- The SACB further pays for tuition and other required fees which are strictly related to the academic courses of study (such as compulsory health insurance, examination, and registry and compulsory student fees). Tutoring or private classes’ fees for students enrolled in English or any other programs are not covered. All related educational fees are paid directly to the academic institutions.
- The final financial guarantee is valid for the stated courses only.
- Any change in the assigned course of study or the student’s failure to enroll in consecutive academic terms in courses related to the assigned course of study shall render the document void. Similarly, the FG is not transferable and is exclusively for the named institution. SACB shall not be held liable for studies conducted other than in accordance with the outlined dates. Students seeking to extend their studies must obtain SACB’s prior approval.

In rendering the FG document viable, academic institutions must agree to provide SACB with:
- Monthly attendance reports
- Student progress reports at the mid-term (where applicable)
- Student reports at the conclusion of each academic term, module, or on a session-by-session basis
- Student Alerts (should the institution note issues or changes in student behaviour, consecutive absences or any other concerns that might adversely affect one of our students)

The financial guarantee is binding from the effective date until the void date. It is important to note that should the expiry date occur prior to the end of the current course of study, SACB will pay for the entire course duration. SACB reserves the right to cancel the FG should a student or an institution not adhere to the outlined Terms and Conditions. Invoices should be sent to the Bureau as a hard copy and should be sent per student.
Start of the Scholarship and Payment
Following each student’s arrival in Canada and throughout the validity period of each Financial Sponsorship Certificate, SACB agrees to pay, upon receipt of an original invoice issued in respect of each student, the student’s registration, tuition, and health fees provided the student remains registered in the program. This sponsorship excludes such matters as books, materials and service charges.

Registration Policy
Registration of any Saudi scholarship student into a post-secondary institution must be approved in advance by SACB. If a scholarship student (or agent of a scholarship student) contacts the school and requests proof of registration, he or she must be directed to SACB before any registration, whether written or oral, can be completed. Students should not be permitted into class unless the FG has been received by the accepting school or a confirmation email has been sent from a SACB Advisor indicating that the student should be permitted into class and that the FG is in process.

Administrative Reporting

Progress Reports
By way of the Consent Form, academic institutions are authorized to release information (transcripts, academic progress reports, etc.) to SACB. Please note that once a student has come onto the KASP scholarship, reporting should only go to SACB. The Bureau expects Canadian academic institutions to send transcripts and study plans for Saudi scholarship students periodically to enable SACB to track the students’ progress and academic advancement.

Withdrawals, Course Additions/Reductions, and Extensions
All scholarship students must receive permission from their Bureau Advisor if they wish to make any changes to their program of study. Accordingly, no reduction or addition to courses is completed without the prior approval of SACB.

Vacation Policy
Scholarship students are required to gain prior approval for vacation from a SACB Advisor. Once an approval has been granted, the academic institution must submit a letter to the Bureau via PDF indicating that the vacation time will not interrupt the student’s studies. The school will then receive confirmation that the vacation has been granted with an indication of when the student should return.

Invoicing the Bureau
All enquiries in regards to finances must be directed to the Finance Department. The students file number (in SACB) must be clearly stated on the invoice (usually mentioned in the bottom left-hand corner of the financial guarantee). Please note that copies of invoices or invoices sent by fax will not be paid – invoices should be originals when claims are filed. Invoices must also be clearly itemized, as some items are not covered by the scholarship program and will not be paid (i.e. parking, housing, textbooks, overdue charges or fees for sports activities).

Invoices to the Bureau should clearly state the First, Middle, and Last name of the student as SACB sponsors numerous students with overlapping first and last names. Student ID or number should also be clearly stated. Each invoice issues should only be concerning one student Start and end dates of the
 invoiced period should be included on all invoices. Start and end dates of the invoiced period should match the dates of the financial guarantee issued for the student, otherwise the invoice would be rejected. All invoices must be original and mailed via post to SACB. In addition to this, SACB will require the name of the person along with contact information in the Finance Department – Account Receivables who will be responsible for confirmation and enquiries. Confirmation of payment receipts must be sent back to SACB via email. Invoice number and date are to be clearly mentioned. Invoices are to indicate the breakdown of costs invoiced for i.e. invoices with one total only will not be authorized by SACB. Statements should not be sent as a means of invoicing. Although it requires an average period of 30 days to process an invoice, SACB kindly requests a maximum of 60 days for settlement.

**Withdrawals, Early Completion, and Refunds**
Upon termination, withdrawal or early completion SACB requires a letter that clearly states the last date the student attended the institution. Please be prompt with this, as once a student has transferred there is a relatively short period of time in which we can continue to pay for the previous period of study. Similarly, once a student has opened his/her Academic file, all monies owing on the ESL portion of their scholarship must have been discharged.

**Graduated Students**

**Degree Verification**
All Saudi students who graduate from Canadian universities are required to have their degrees verified by the SACB before they return to Saudi Arabia. Upon their return, they must have their degrees assessed by MOHE for equivalency purposes. Since the MOHE needs to follow certain criteria in order to assess the degree obtained, and to expedite this process of assessment, the SACB works with the university to confirm that the student fulfilled or met all the graduation requirements set out by the university.