

GUIDE FOR PRESENTING AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE APPLICATION
TO THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE
FOR EXCEPTIONAL CASES

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1 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this guide is to provide information to students about how to prepare an exceptional case application. The following notions and principles relate to exceptional cases and waivers for student financial assistance.

1.1 Contribution-based programs

The Loans and Bursaries Program and the Loans Program for Part-Time Studies are contribution-based financial assistance programs. As such, they are founded on the principle that the student is primarily responsible for the cost of his or her education. However, additional financial assistance may be awarded to students who do not have the means to pursue their studies, in order to cover basic needs deemed essential for their education.

1.2 Ministerial discretionary and exceptional case waiver powers

The Minister of Higher Education and the Minister of Education have discretionary power to waive provisions of the law for the purpose of awarding financial assistance to individuals who did not qualify for the student financial assistance programs or who did qualify but were not entitled to a sufficient amount of assistance.

1.3 The mandate of the Examination Committee for Exceptional Cases

Prior to using discretionary powers, Ministers must secure the opinion of the Examination Committee for Exceptional Cases (the Committee). The mandate of the Committee, whose members are appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, is to review the financial assistance exceptional case applications that it receives and submit its opinion to the Minister for a final decision.

1.4 Studies in jeopardy

Ministers may award “exceptional” financial assistance if, in his or her estimation, an applicant’s studies would be in jeopardy without it. This is a fundamental criterion that the Committee is required to consider when reviewing applications.

1.5 Applications analyzed case by case

All exceptional case applications are unique, and each one has its own specific profile that is based on a singular combination of component factors. Consequently, applications submitted to the Committee are examined on a case-by-case basis.

2 IS YOUR EXCEPTIONAL CASE APPLICATION ADMISSIBLE?

Before submitting your exceptional case application, please ensure that the following conditions are met.

2.1 Application for student financial assistance

You must have applied for financial assistance under the Loans and Bursaries Program or the Loans Program for Part-Time Studies, and:

- 1) You received a reply informing you that you are ineligible for financial assistance for one of the following reasons:
 - You have reached the maximum number of months of study for which you were eligible for financial assistance.
 - You have reached the debt ceiling allowed for your level of education.
 - You have reached the maximum number of authorized months of study and the debt ceiling.

OR

- 2) You received an amount of student financial assistance that you deem insufficient to pursue your education.

2.2 False declaration or loan in default

If you have received a notice informing you that your student financial assistance file has been suspended, processing of your exceptional case application will be put on hold pending a decision in that matter. If you have been declared ineligible for student financial assistance programs due to a false declaration, your exceptional case application will remain invalid for the full period of your disqualification.

Additionally, if you have a loan in default, you will be required to reach agreement with the collection department **before** submitting your exceptional case application, failing which processing will be suspended.

2.3 Student status

If you are currently a beneficiary under the Loans and Bursaries Program and are a full-time student, you must maintain this status. In other words, if you withdraw from one or more courses and become a part-time student, your exceptional case application will be automatically declined. However, if you are pursuing part-time studies and are deemed full-time, your application will be considered.

You must be enrolled (**not deemed enrolled**) when your exceptional case application is received by the Secretariat of the Examination Committee for Exceptional Cases. Moreover, if you apply after your studies are over or are

nearing completion, the members of the Committee could decide that you do not meet eligibility requirements because your education is not jeopardized.

2.4 Educational institutions that are designated for loans only

Ministers cannot award additional financial assistance to students who attend educational institutions that are designated for loans only and who receive the maximum permitted amount of \$1,042/month.¹ However, if your application concerns your ineligibility for the Loans and Bursaries Program or a request for additional financial assistance up to the \$1,042/month maximum, it will be considered.

2.5 Notices in the student's file

The student must reply to the notices in their student financial assistance file that request additional documents or information (e.g.: Presence of a letter requesting justification of income, or message indicating the suspension of instalments). This allows you to obtain the assistance to which the student is entitled according to their situation.

3 WHAT MUST YOUR EXCEPTIONAL CASE APPLICATION INCLUDE?

It is essential that you first consult with the person in charge of student aid at your educational institution. That person must initially make a full review of your situation to determine all other solutions at your disposal before you submit an exceptional case application, since they are a last resort. If warranted, that person will then assist you in the preparation of your exceptional case application and ensure that all required documentation is valid and complete.

Only waiver applications that have been duly completed and sent by the person in charge of an educational institution's student aid office will be submitted to the Committee for consideration. If your application is not complete, you will receive a request for additional information and/or supporting documents, and processing will be suspended pending their receipt by the Committee.² The date of your application to the Committee will be determined as of when all required additional information and/or supporting documents have been received.

Your exceptional case application must therefore include **all** of the following documents:

3.1 A signed explanatory letter (see the recommendations of the Committee on the preparation of an exceptional case application, on page 7) in which you:

¹ Amount set for award year 2022-2023, may be subject to change.

² If you fail to reply within 45 days of receiving the information request, your file will be closed without prior notice.

If you are ineligible for the student financial assistance programs:

- Explain why you have reached or exceeded the maximum number of allowed months of study or the debt ceiling for your level of education (e.g., illness, pregnancy, reorientation, return to studies, etc.).
- Clearly demonstrate why your studies will be jeopardized if no financial assistance is awarded to you.
- Explain how you have contributed to the cost of your education (e.g., part-time employment, bursary applications, cutting expenses, etc.).
- Provide any reasons why you are unable to contribute to the cost of your education.

If you deem that the amount of student financial assistance awarded to you is insufficient:

- Explain the exceptional nature of your situation or list the additional and/or unexpected expenses you face during the award year not considered by the Loans and Bursaries Program that will jeopardize your studies if no supplementary financial assistance is awarded to you.
- State the additional amount of financial assistance that you estimate will be required for you to pursue your studies, clearly justifying your calculations.
- Explain how you have contributed to the cost of your education (e.g., part-time employment, bursary applications, cutting expenses, etc.).
- Provide any reasons why you are unable to contribute to the cost of your education.

3.2 An official letter from your educational institution's academic services department, stating the name of your program and the date on which you expect to receive your diploma.

The letter can be written by a student aid officer at your educational institution if they can confirm the requested information. For graduate or doctoral programs, include a letter from your thesis supervisor.

3.3 A fully-executed and signed Student's Budget Within the Framework of an Exceptional Case Application form.

This form is available from your educational institution's student aid office and on the website (Quebec.ca/student-financial-assistance). All sections of the form must be filled out.

IMPORTANT

Your budget must cover the award year (September 1–August 31). You do not need to list your income for the preceding months. However, if a significant financial event took place prior to the start of the award year you can mention it in the **explanatory letter**.

3.4 A fully-executed and signed Spouse's Budget Within the Framework of an Exceptional Case Application form (if applicable).

This form is available from your educational institution's student aid office and on the website (Quebec.ca/student-financial-assistance).

3.5 Any document in support of your exceptional case application that could enable the Committee to provide the Minister with its opinion on whether or not your studies are in jeopardy and the amount of any financial assistance to be awarded to you (e.g. a lease, medical report, letter from a psychosocial worker, proof of your exceptional expenses).

3.6 If you are a college or a university student, a copy of all your transcripts for the studies at your current educational institution.

If you are enrolled at an educational institution outside Québec or were last enrolled several years ago, you need to provide copies of **all your post-secondary and/or vocational report cards and/or transcripts**.

3.7 A signed cover letter from the person in charge of student financial aid at your educational institution, who is also responsible for submitting your exceptional case application by fax³ or digital transmission⁴ or by mail to the following address to the Secretariat:

Secrétariat du Comité d'examen des demandes dérogatoires
Direction des programmes d'accessibilité financière aux études et des recours
Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur
1035, rue De La Chevrotière
Québec (Québec) G1R 5A5

(Submissions by email will NOT be accepted.)

³ A fax number may be obtained from the person in charge of student financial aid at your educational institution.

⁴ Digital transmission is only available for institutions.

4 WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR APPLICATION ONCE IT HAS BEEN RECEIVED BY THE SECRETARIAT OF THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CASES?

- As soon as your exceptional case application has been registered by the Secretariat of the Examination Committee for Exceptional Cases, a written acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to you.
- Your exceptional case application will be examined to ensure that all the prerequisites have been met, that all required documents have been provided, and that your explanations are clear, concise and germane.
- The Secretariat reserves the right to require additional documentation that it deems necessary for processing your application.
- Once your exceptional case application is complete, the Secretariat will prepare it for presentation to the members of the Committee. You will receive written notification informing you that your application will be submitted to the Committee at its next meeting. (See calendar of meetings, item 5.)
- The Examination Committee for Exceptional Cases reviews each application on the basis of the documents and explanations provided.
- The Examination Committee issues an opinion about each exceptional case application. All opinions are then referred to the Minister for a decision.
- Once the Minister reaches a decision, the amounts granted are recorded in the Aide financière aux études computer system. You will receive a written letter informing you of the outcome.
- Save unusual circumstances, you will receive a reply to your exceptional case application within two to three weeks of the Committee meeting.

If you have questions regarding the processing of your exceptional case application, please contact the person in charge of student aid at your educational institution.

5 2022–2023 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS OF THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CASES⁵

Mois	Dates
August 2022	17, 18, 19
September 2022	21, 22, 23
October 2022	26, 27, 28
November 2022	23, 24, 25
January 2023	18, 19
February 2023	22, 23
March 2023	22, 23
April 2023	26, 27
May 2023	24, 25
June 2023	14, 15

⁵ Subject to change without prior notice. Please check with the person in charge of student aid at your educational institution.

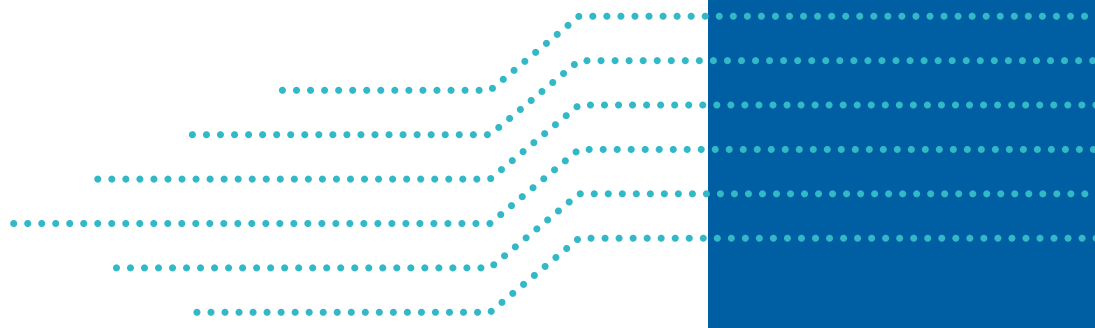
6 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CASES ON PREPARING AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE APPLICATION

- Your exceptional case application should be drawn up with great care. It is important that the members of the Examination Committee for Exceptional Cases receive the most germane information possible so that they can acquire a complete picture of your financial, family and academic situation and determine whether or not your financial obligations are of an exceptional nature.
- If you have reached or exceeded the maximum number of eligible months and/or the maximum debt ceiling, please provide a clear and accurate explanation for this occurrence. Here are a few reasons that could apply to your situation:
 - You have decided to pursue your studies in a different discipline
 - You were obliged to reorient your studies for different reasons
 - The length of your studies was extended due to your academic results
- If you are currently receiving student financial assistance and wish to secure an additional amount, it is important for you to provide a clear and accurate explanation of why the current amount of support is insufficient. For example:
 - Your marital or family situation has changed
 - You are facing expenses that you were unable to foresee at the start of the academic year
 - You can no longer contribute to the cost of your education
- The Committee members need you to demonstrate the exceptional nature of your expenses, and show that these are not provided for in the rules of the Loans and Bursaries Program and that they jeopardize your studies. Moreover, if you are unable to contribute to the cost of your education, it is important that you explain the reasons for this.
- You are required to attach supporting documentation that demonstrates the exceptional nature of your situation (medical reports, letters from psychosocial workers, bills for unforeseen expenses, etc.) as well as any other documents that you deem useful for the review of your application (lease, diverse bills, etc.).
- Your explanatory letter, comprising information requested in item 3.1, should be at least a half page in length.

7 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



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- 3.1 A signed **explanatory letter** that addresses the issues that apply to your situation
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- 3.2 An **official letter from your educational institution's academic services department** stating the name of your program and the date on which you expect to receive your diploma
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- 3.3 A fully-executed and signed ***Student's Budget Within the Framework of an Exceptional Case Application*** form
-
- 3.4 A fully-executed and signed ***Spouse's Budget Within the Framework of an Exceptional Case Application*** form (if applicable to your situation)
-
- 3.5 Any **document in support of your exceptional case application** that could enable the Committee to provide the Minister with its opinion on whether or not your studies are in jeopardy and the amount of any financial assistance to be awarded to you
-
- 3.6 If you are a college or a university student, **a copy of all your transcripts for the studies at your current educational institution.**
- If you are enrolled at an educational institution outside Québec or were last enrolled several years ago, you need to provide copies of **all your post-secondary and/or vocational report cards and/or transcripts.**
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- 3.7 A signed **cover letter** from the person in charge of student aid at your educational institution
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