

2025 U-PASS REFERENDUM QUESTION

Background:

U-Pass is the student group discount program that provides students with unlimited public transit offered by Edmonton, Strathcona County, and St Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Spruce Grove, Beaumont, and Route 747 (airport route).

In 2006, the GSA, along with the University of Alberta Students' Union and the MacEwan, Norquest, and NAIT student associations, negotiated to implement the initial U-Pass program. The first GSA U-Pass referendum was approved in 2007 and subsequent referenda have been approved in 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2021.

More information about the U-Pass can be found [here](#).

The current U-Pass agreement is due to expire on 31 August 2025. After negotiation, an Agreement-In Principle was reached that would see the cost of the U-Pass set on a 3 year contract at the following rates:

2025-2026 - \$180.00/term
2026-2027 - \$182.50/term
2027-2028 - \$185.00/term

The previous Agreement-In-Principle ran a pilot program with additional exemptions under the U-Pass program for:

- Seniors (any student over the age of 65 at the start of a given academic term);
- Recipients of the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program (any student who can demonstrate participation in the AISH program); *and*
- Distance (any student who can demonstrate their principal residence is greater than 100 km from Edmonton).

After this round of negotiations, these exemptions are now permanent.

In November 2024 GSA Council, pursuant to GSA Bylaw and Policy on referenda, approved the wording for the 2025 U-Pass referendum question and the holding of the referendum.

Question:

Do you support the continuation of the Universal Transit Pass (U-Pass) subject to the following conditions:

- The U-Pass would provide unlimited usage of regular transit systems in Edmonton, Strathcona County, and St Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Spruce Grove, Beaumont, and Route 747 (airport route) within the participating municipalities' service area during the Fall, Winter, and/or Spring/Summer (May-August) terms to all continuing graduate students enrolled in at least one course for credit in a term (includes thesis registrations);
- The cost of the U-Pass fee to each graduate student would be mandatory and set at \$180.00/term in 2025-2026, \$182.50/term in 2026-2027, and \$185.00/term in 2027-2028 (for each of the Fall, Winter, and Spring/Summer terms), beginning 1 September 2025 and extending to 31 August 2028;
- Under certain circumstances, some graduate students would continue to be exempt or eligible

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to opt-out of the U-Pass program (below are excerpts from the current U-Pass agreement concerning exemption and opt-out provisions, with the addition of the pilot program exemptions).

Excerpt from the 2025-2028 U-Pass Agreement (addition of pilot program exemptions) The following graduate students would be exempt from the U-Pass program:

- “a) a Student who is not enrolled in any course for credit located on a University of Alberta campus within any of the Municipalities for that School Term;
- b) a Student who is enrolled only in the Executive MBA program;
- c) a graduate Student who is designated as an off-campus thesis student by the University; *and*
- d) a Student who is enrolled only in a program of study offered by the University’s Faculty of Extension, which program of study leads to a certificate.”

The following graduate students would be eligible to opt-out of the U-Pass program:

- “a) a Student who has a valid Disabled Adult Transit Service (DATS) registration, Strathcona County Mobility Bus registration, or St. Albert Handibus registration, Spruce Grove Specialized Transit Service (STS) registration, Fort Saskatchewan Special Transportation Services Society (STSS) registration, or Leduc Assisted Transportation Services (LATS) registration; and is able to prove their registration with a valid photo ID card;
- b) a Student who has a valid CNIB (Canadian National Institute for the Blind) registration and is able to confirm such registration with a valid CNIB-issued photo ID card;
- c) a Student who is currently an employee of a transit system owned and operated by any of the Municipalities and is able to provide written confirmation on official letterhead of their employment at the beginning of each School Term; *and*
- d) a Student who, pursuant to official University regulations, policies or procedures (as may be amended from time to time) respecting registration and fees assessments, has the option of being assessed the athletics and recreation fee or the health services fee by the University, and who is in a cooperative work experience program or work internship and who is registered only in one or more courses designated as “Work Experience” for that School Term, and who is either:
 - i. For Fall and Winter Terms - fulfilling their course requirements outside the boundaries of the Municipalities for the majority of the School Term; or
 - ii. For Spring/Summer Term – fulfilling the majority of their course requirements outside of the boundaries of the Municipalities; or
- e) a Student who is enrolled at another post-secondary educational institution and is required to participate in a transportation program similar to the U-Pass Program (if any) being offered to students of this other post-secondary educational institution by said institution and the Municipalities.”

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- f) a Student who is, or will be turning, 65 years of age or older during the relevant School Term, and who can provide documentation verifying the same;
- g) a Student with a valid registration in the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program during the relevant School Term, and who can provide documentation verifying the same; or
- h) a Student whose principal residence is outside of a 100km radius measured from the main campus on which their in-person courses are delivered, and who can provide documentation verifying the same.