



University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union
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Dear graduate students,

On April 4, 2017, Governing Council voted to increase tuition fees for publicly funding programs for 2017/2018. This directly affects you as a University of Toronto graduate student. As per provincial regulations, tuition fees of graduate programs are allowed to increase by 5% each year, and while some programs will see only nominal increases, we must talk about the normalized expectation that students must continue to pay more for their programs each year. It should also be emphasized that your tuition fees do not account for additional fees paid to the University of Toronto, such as non-academic compulsory fees which also have been approved for fee increases in the 2017/2018 academic calendar year.

[Universities Canada](#) estimates show that there are about 72,500 graduate students enrolled in institutions across Ontario as of 2016. At the University of Toronto, with over 18,000 graduate students registered in either full time or part-time studies, we represent about 25% of graduate students in the province of Ontario. Due to the increasing size of our Membership there are complex factors that impact our graduate body and that the anxiety of students who worry about funding their education is real. We applaud the University of Toronto for increasing financial aid for students, but we also question the sustainability of increasing tuition and financial aid without taking into account that there are always students who are unable to access additional support when needed.

We are fundamentally opposed to the increase of graduate tuition fees, particularly at a time where the University of Toronto is discussing a demographic change and expected decrease in enrolment of undergraduates at the St. George campus. As part of Phase 1 of their [Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development](#), the University of Toronto Academic Board reported in March that they will be seeking an additional 1,000 graduate "seats" from the province. When the province allocated 6,000 additional graduate seats in [2011 Provincial Budget](#), the total population of graduate students in Ontario increased significantly more than estimated. It is then easy for us to conclude that if granted these 1,000 seats, the graduate population at the University of Toronto will exceed this number. This has led us to suspect that this renewed focus on graduate students is to account for expected lack of undergraduates to enroll at the University of Toronto St. George campus in the years to come. On average, graduate students pay higher fees than our undergraduate counterparts. For graduate students, our demographics are also changing and we are witnessing an increase of graduates under the age of thirty. When we take into account that these are prime years for generating wealth and savings, as well as the impact that graduate studies has on the mental health and well-being of our Members, we see these **increases in tuition fees as a burdensome increase in pressure for students.**

Reducing the tuition fees of selected doctoral streams by \$70 does not alleviate the pressures of financial insecurity that plague many of our Members, particularly those in professional streams, unfunded cohorts or who enter as International Students that are not afforded the same protections



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as Domestic Students. It does not take into account graduate students who utilize food banks, who take on additional jobs on top of their academic work, who have dependents or have responsibilities outside of the University of Toronto.

We would also like to emphasize that at a time when domestic and international graduate students from the Medical Sciences have been unable to partake in their labs, which impacts their research, their time to completion, and their residency in Ontario, to allow for tuition increases while leaving these students vulnerable is beyond troubling.

We will continue to advocate for a truly accessible and affordable education for all students. We are writing this to assure you that this will not change.

Sincerely,

The University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union Executive Committee



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