Opposition to the University Mandated Leave of Absence Policy

Dear Graduate Students,

The University of Toronto Graduate Students’ Union (UTGSU) Executive Committee opposes the proposed “University Mandated Leave of Absence” Policy in its current form. The Executive Committee have received concerns from Members and community partners that perceive this policy to be excessive and inappropriate in seeking solutions to the mental health issues faced by students. Graduate students are fortunate to have a voluntary leave of absence implemented at The School of Graduate Studies. However a mandatory absence does not help graduate students seek specific accommodations to help them complete their program in a timely manner. We need our institution to re-invest our tuition dollars into creating an accessible and accommodating environment that works for all Members of the University of Toronto. Moving forward, the Executive Committee asks The University of Toronto to act on the following items before moving forward with the implementation of the policy:

1. Increase the number of graduate-student specific accessibility advisors to mitigate the chances of students being subjected to the Mandated Leave of Absence Policy;

2. Remove item 13 from the proposed policy, which violates the policy’s spirit of a compassionate option for graduate students because it indicates that the Student Code of Conduct can be used as a punitive measure in any cross-consultation assessment;

3. As per the Students’ for Barrier Free Access (SBA) petition (linked here: https://goo.gl/AwfWJ7) currently circulating, “[The University of Toronto should] engage in a broad and in-depth consultation with students, with the wider disabled and psychiatrized community, and with the human rights community [about the proposed policy]”;

If you would like to provide further feedback on the proposed University Mandated Leave of Absence Policy, please contact Brie Berry-Crossfield, the UTGSU’s Finance and University Governance Commissioner, at finance@utgsu.ca.

Sincerely,

The UTGSU Executive Committee