

April 22, 2020

Canadian Sociological Association Statement on Student Advocacy: Academic Extensions and Suspend Summer Tuition for Graduate Students

The Student Concerns Subcommittee of the Canadian Sociological Association recognizes that graduate students across the country are petitioning their institutions to grant academic extensions and suspend summer tuition.

The COVID-19 pandemic has serious ramifications for the well-being and academic progress of all graduate students across Canada. Government actions have affected normal progress through graduate programs. Students no longer have access to university services and resources, including libraries, laboratories, and their workspaces on campuses. Many students are unable to continue fieldwork and data collection as a result of government policies and closures. At home, some students do not have access to the internet, special computer software and equipment, and many are facing additional caring responsibilities and financial difficulties in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. Some students may be eligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), however, this program is intended to provide people with temporary income support. This means that students will be relying on this fund to help them cover costs of basic living expenses (e.g., groceries, utilities, rent).

Graduate students often seek additional training and employment in the summer months. There has been a significant loss of available research assistantships and summer teaching contracts. Professional conferences have been canceled or postponed, and expected opportunities for progress in post-graduate study are uncertain. All of this, coupled with social isolation and overwhelming stress negatively impacts students' physical and mental wellbeing.

In light of these factors, and in keeping with petitions put forward by student unions across the country, the Canadian Sociological Association is therefore supporting graduate students by calling on universities to:

- 1) Suspend summer tuition and fee payments for graduate students normally due in May;
- 2) Commit and extend guaranteed funding for all graduate students that is equal to or greater than the baseline funding that all graduate students received in 2019-2020; and
- 3) Provide automatic program extensions for all students registered in Canadian graduate programs.

Regards,

Dr. Tina Fetner, President
On behalf of the Executive Committee