



**Graduate Students' Association - University of Saskatchewan
Council Meeting Agenda
Tuesday August 18, 2020 – Email Meeting**

The GSA operates on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis Nation.
We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm
our relationship with one another.

#	Item	Page	Action
1	Call to Order		
2	Approval of the agenda	1	<i>Decision</i>
3	Approval of the minutes from June 16, 2020	2-10	<i>Decision</i>
4	Information to be received	11-24	<i>Decision</i>
	June 11, 2020 Executive Meeting minutes		
	June 25, 2020 Bursary Selection Committee minutes		
	July 9, 2020 Executive Meeting minutes		
5	Executive reports	25-72	<i>Information</i>
	A. Report of the President		
	B. Report of the VP Finance and Operations		
	C. Report of the VP Academic and Student Affairs		
	D. Report of the VP External Affairs		
6	Other Business/Announcements		<i>Information</i>
7	Adjournment		<i>Decision</i>

Next meeting: September 22, 2020.



University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association
Council Meeting
Tuesday, June 16, 2020. Email Meeting*

As Council gathers, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Attendance: See appendix A

**Email Meeting: The June 16th, 2020 Council Meeting took place over email due to the global health pandemic of COVID-19, where the Government of Saskatchewan made directives to practice social distancing in order to curb the spread of the virus.*

1. Call to Order

All Council Members were emailed a link to the Agenda, as well as a link for voting on agenda items in order to participate over email. Councilors had 24 hours to participate. The Call to Order commenced as soon as Councilors received the link. The quorum for the meeting was reached. There was no issue in maintaining quorum as all members could go through the entire agenda over the course of 24 hours at their convenience. Mr. Osei Clarke compiled the meeting minutes.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Chair, prior to the meeting, sent Councilors a request for any amendments to the agenda as circulated and provided a deadline to respond with any amendments. There were no amendments submitted.

Motion to approve the Agenda. (Koop/Godakanda)

Carried

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 7th, 2020 minutes. (Koop/Godakanda)

Carried

4. Information to be received

- A. March 2, 2020, Diversity Committee minutes
- B. April 3, 2020 Elections and Referenda Committee minutes
- C. May 1, 2020, Executive Retreat Meeting minutes
- D. May 14, 2020, Executive Meeting minutes

Motion to receive agenda items 4A-D. (Koop/Godakanda)

Carried

5. GSA Executives Report

A. President's Report

The report was presented to Councilors and is available in the agenda package. There were no questions for President Inam.

B. Vice President Finance & Operations Report

The report was presented to Councilors and was available in the agenda package. There were no questions for VP Ramin.

C. Vice President Academic & Student Affairs Report

The report was presented to Councilors and is available in the agenda package. There were questions for VP Mellidez.

Councilor: Can you speak to the University's suicide prevention strategy that was just announced and with regards to Mental Health what is the status of the initiatives from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA)?

VP Mellidez: I did not know about this, thank you for bringing it up. I have started reading the protocols and standards that CSA has and I will be in discussion with senior administration about the possibility of implementing it. With regards to the suicide prevention strategy, so far, the GSA has not been consulted nor informed about this new strategy. I will look more into it and I will, hopefully, give you a more definite answer soon.

D. Vice President External Affairs Report

The report was presented to Councilors and is available in the agenda package. There were questions for VP Gill.

Councilor: I would like to know more about the Canadian Federation of Students and their support for students with disabilities here.

VP Gill: The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) has been monitoring, assessing and updating the situation on a regular basis during these unprecedented times. Here is a list of activities the CFS has been involved in during this pandemic:

- On March 18th, 2020, the CFS created a toolkit for student unions to support their members. This toolkit can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Qem0cNZFKvv-lhhO--FOlBmBVIRckhLsyGNf7dNXCZE/edit>
- The CFS asked the federal government to extend the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to all students and recent graduates regardless of employment and income status. The CFS sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on April 15, 2020 from more than 45 associations (including the GSA from the University of Saskatchewan) to remove the condition of previous income and employment status from the CERB eligibility criteria. This letter can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/letter-to-justin-trudeau-re-students-need-cerb/>

Currently, the CFS is advocating to have the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) amount increased to \$2, 000 for all students, and to allow international students access to CESB nationwide.

- CFS is also fighting for graduate students on other issues such as, asking for tuition waiver due to the financial difficulties impacting students, extending the time for program completion for students, and extension to scholarships by Tri-council and other funding agencies. The CFS issued an open letter regarding these concerns to the federal government, provincial government, Canada's research funding councils, and universities' senior administration, on behalf of all their members. This letter can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/open-letter-grad-students-and-covid-19/>
- In May, a survey was conducted by CFS about the future of post-secondary education due to the impact of COVID-19 in which a significant number of students participated and shared their concerns. The result and details of this survey is available here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/survey-post-secondary-students-reconsidering-fall-semester-plans-in-wake-of-covid-19/> More information on CFS initiatives during COVID-19 can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/covid-19/> They also post updates on their Facebook and Instagram page.
- When it comes to support for students with disabilities, this is one of the priorities of CFS to ask universities to increase support for students with disabilities, and make their institutions more accessible financially, emotionally and physically. Due to these continued efforts by CFS, in 2019, the federal government expanded eligibility criteria for grants for students with disabilities. I am representing the GSA in the upcoming CFS annual meeting, which is in July, 2020 and I will raise this concern after discussion with our executives.

6. Other Business & Announcements

There were a few comments/questions from Councilors requesting further information which the President responded to.

Councilor: Can the transit bus pass/fee for graduate students be made optional in any given term?

President: Thank you for your input Council member. The GSA is still in discussion with SaskTransit regarding the U-Pass for fall 2020 and we are working towards a favourable outcome for all graduate students. A final decision has not been made yet. Graduate students can opt out of the U-Pass under the eligibility criteria found here: <https://gsa.usask.ca/services/upass-details.pdf>

Councilor: I would like to report a concern that many graduate students in the physics department currently have. The university has not granted access to lab facilities that are necessary in order to perform their research. These students are particularly concerned that they had to pay tuition for the summer term, despite being unable to do any thesis work. Their programs will likely now take longer to complete and be more costly than expected. I would like to ask the GSA to discuss with the university administration the possibility of a tuition refund for graduate students who are unable to access the lab spaces they need to work.

President: Thank you for sharing your concerns Council member. The GSA is currently in discussion with Dr. McDougall, who is part of the Pandemic Response Team (PRT), regarding ongoing graduate student concerns. We are continuously advocating to be a part of the PRT in order to have graduate students' voices heard and are also meeting with other senior leaders to address students' concerns.

Presently, the university is focusing on allowing access to campus to graduate students who fall under a specific approval criterion, which can be found on page 11 here:

<https://updates.usask.ca/documents/framework-for-increased-activity-across-all-areas.pdf>

Graduate students who wish to return to campus should contact their supervisor to apply for the safety permit which allows access to buildings/labs on campus.

Councilor: What financial support has been given to international students in course-based programs?

President: Thank you for the question Council member. Graduate students may be eligible for the Crisis Financial Aid being offered by the university in the form of loans and/or grants. Please contact Student Central at askus@usask.ca to apply and include a brief description of your needs in the message. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is also advocating on behalf of all graduate students to expand the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) so it includes

international students, who have been excluded, and to increase the CESB to \$2,000 for all students. Graduate students can help by contacting their local MP and voicing their concerns. More information on how graduate students can get involved in these initiatives can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/covid-19/>

The GSA will continue to offer bursaries to graduate students and is reallocating funds where possible to increase the funding for future bursaries. International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) can assist international students with other options that may be available as well. Their information can be found here: <https://students.usask.ca/international/issac.php#About>

Councilor: Are there any updates about spring/summer tuition being reduced after last month's discussion?

President: Thank you for sharing your concerns Council member. The GSA is currently in discussion with Dr. McDougall, who is part of the Pandemic Response Team (PRT), regarding ongoing graduate student concerns. We are continuously advocating to be a part of the PRT in order to have graduate students' voices heard and are also meeting with other senior leaders to address students' concerns.

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Graduate students who wish to return to campus should contact their supervisor to apply for the safety permit which allows access to buildings/labs on campus.

7. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn. (Koop/Godakanda).

Carried

Appendix A

Academic Council	Name of Councillors and (alternates)	Sep.24 2019	Oct.15 2019	Nov.5 2019	Dec.3 2019	Jan.28 2020	Feb.25 2020	Mar.17 2020	Apr.7 2020	Jun.16 2020	Aug.18 2020
Agricultural and Resources Economics (ARE) Graduate Student Association	Ran San (Valentina Ofori)	N/A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Animal & Poultry Science Grad Students' Assoc.	Muhammad Imran (Kiana Rieger)	P	A	P	A	A	A	A	P	A	
ARCHAIA	Adrienne Ratushniak (Michelle Gowan)	P	P	A	A	P	A	P	A	A	
Biology Graduate Student Association	Rebecca Smith (Ruth Greuel) (Andrea Wishart)	N/A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Chemistry Course Council	Naheda Sahtout (Doug Fansher)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Anatomy, Physiology & Pharmacology	Kushagra Parolia (Andrew Roebuc)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	A	R	P	P	P	
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Biochemistry, Microbiology & Immunology	Sampurna Ghosh (Megha Rohamar)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Community Health & Epidemiology	Harini Aiyer (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	P	A	P	A	P	
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Health Sciences	Michael Zaki (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Rifat Zahan Muhammad Aminul Islam (Md. Nadim)	N/A	p	p	P	P	P	P	P	P	

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association
Executive Meeting Minutes
June 11, 2020, 05:00 PM-07:00 PM

Present: Humaira Inam (President), Hadi Ramin (VP Finance and Operations), Carmen Marquez Mellidez (VP Academic and Student Affairs), Qasim Shahzad Gill (VP External Affairs).

Regrets: None; Absent: None

1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

The President called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

The President thanked the executives for being actively involved and committed towards their roles. She expects that the executives will continue the same spirit throughout the term.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The President asked if there were any additions or amendments to the agenda as circulated. Seeing none the President asked for a:

Motion: to approve the agenda as circulated was moved by the VP Academic and Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External Affairs. Vote: Passed.

4 in favour. Motion Carried.

3. Approval of May 14, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes

The President asked whether there were any further amendments to the May 14, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes.

Motion to approve May 01, 2020 Retreat Meeting Minutes was moved by the VP Academic and Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External Affairs. Vote: Passed.

4 in favour. Motion Carried.

4. Items for Action

4.1 New graduate representative for the Faith Leadership Council.

Motion to approve Carmen Marquez as the new graduate representative for the Faith Leadership Council was moved by the President and seconded by the VP External Affairs.

**3 in favour. 1 Abstained.
Motion Carried.**

4.2 GSA Council Meeting dates for 2020/2021.

The President wanted to confirm the GSA council meeting dates for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. The dates were proposed as follows:

- August 18, 2020
- September 22, 2020
- October 20, 2020
- November 10, 2020
- December 8, 2020
- January 26, 2021
- February 23, 2021
- March 16, 2021
- April 6, 2021
- April 13, 2021 (Potential AGM)

Motion to approve the GSA Council meeting dates for 2020/2021 was moved by the VP Academic and Student Affairs and seconded by the VP External Affairs.

4 in favour. Motion Carried.

4.3 Newsletter Content

The President proposed that the content for the newsletter would be provided by the GSA executives 1 week prior to the newsletter being published, and the newsletter would be published every third week of the month.

Motion to approve the monthly GSA newsletter for publication during the third week of the month was moved by the VP Finance and seconded by the President.

4 in favour. Motion Carried.

5. Items for Information / Discussion

5.1 VP External Affairs update on initiatives

5.) The VP External Affairs reminded the executives about the upcoming standalone meeting with the Canadian Federation of Student (CFS). VP External Affairs informed the executives that the registration deadline is June 12th and he has registered himself for this meeting after consulting with the President. The meeting will be held via Zoom on July 17, 2020. He further informed the executives that if the executives would like to submit agenda items for the meeting or want to pose any question, they can do this before June 12th as well. The president thanked the VP external affairs for registering himself and attending the event on behalf of GSA.

- b) The VP External Affairs reminded the executives about the Phase-Three plan of Government of Saskatchewan which had begun on June 8th. Under the plan, the government expand the capacity of gathering. The VP external affairs asked the executives if they are willing to open the GSA common for students. All executives discussed all the aspects in detail and unanimously agreed that they will continue to follow the university protocol and guideline that are currently in place, and as such the GSA Commons would remain closed for now.
- c) The VP External Affairs asked if the executives would like to organize an event to celebrate Canada Day. Some executives brought up the concern of social distancing and how it is difficult to arrange an in-person event at the moment due to COVID-19. The executives agreed to delay any in-person event until further notice. The President suggested that perhaps the VP External could do an online event instead for Canada Day.
- d) VP External Affairs informed the executives reminded the executives about the recommendation by the Canada West board concerning the cancellation of first term competition team sports due to the ongoing pandemic and the decision by the University of Saskatchewan to cancel Huskies' first term season of football, and men's and women's soccer. All the executives stated that they were aware of this announcement by the university.

5.2 Monthly Financial Expenditure Report per bylaw 5.3.1

The President asked the VP Finance to present his financial expenditure report for the month.

The VP Finance's report was as follows:

The GSA's May 2020 ledger has been reviewed and approved. During the month of May, there was no revenue for the GSA and expenses included banking, debit, credit fees and charges, staff salaries, executive honoraria, and GSA operating costs.

5.3. Executive Responsibilities & Review Bylaws

The President stated that the executives needed to go over the bylaws in order to ensure that they were carrying out their roles and responsibilities. The President went through the roles and responsibilities according to each of the GSA bylaws for the VP of Academic and Students Affairs, the VP of Finance, and the VP of External Affairs. The President stressed that it was important to be aware of the bylaws and to follow them, and that we would review them often in future meetings.

5.4 Studentcare

The President informed the executives of the health-dental orientation meeting that took place with Robyn from Studentcare on June 11, 2020, which the VP Finance attended as well. The President explained what services Studentcare provided to the GSA and its members through the health and dental insurance coverage, and asked Robyn for clarification on some questions that she had. The President asked the executives to keep their schedule open in the coming days as there may be an urgent meeting required for decision-making concerning improved benefits for the health and dental plan. The executives acknowledged this information and confirmed that they are aware.

5.5 Virtual Events

The President informed the executives that she and the VP Academic and Student Affairs are collaborating on a virtual event with the Student Wellness Centre/Peer Health, which will engage students online in order to combat loneliness and isolation due to the pandemic. They are pleased to report that this is going well and that the GSA will be releasing more information on this event in the coming weeks.

5.6 Fall Orientation

The President informed the executives that the Student Handbook for 2020/2021 has been finalized and the order placed. The President wanted to know what idea the executives had in mind for the fall orientation, and when we should put in the orders for the swag bags. The VP Academic and Student Affairs suggested placing orders by the end of June, and she would coordinate the ordering process. The other executives stated that we should work on ideas for the orientation closer to the end of June when we are aware of what CGPS is doing for their orientation so there is no overlap. The President agreed and stated that we would visit this topic in the next meeting in order to get a good idea of how we will be proceeding for this year's orientation due to the impact of the pandemic.

6. Other Business

The President asked if there was any other business arising. There was none.

7. Confidential Session

8. Adjournment of Meeting

The President asked if there was anything else that needed to be discussed. There was none.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by the VP Academic and seconded by the VP External.

Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.



University of Saskatchewan- Graduate Students' Association
Bursary Selection Committee Meeting Minutes- Spring/Summer Term
June 25, 2020

Members Present: Hadi Ramin (VP Finance and Operations), Carmen Marquez (VP Student Affairs), Doug Fansher (Council Member), Rebecca Smith (Council Member), Alana Demkiw (Council Member).

The VP Finance and Operations called the online meeting (WebEx) to order at 2:00 PM and thanked all the committee members for being present on this important selection process despite their busy schedule. All members present were asked to sign confidentiality documents and send via email to the VP Finance and Operations to ensure all bursary applicants' privacy rights are protected. It was restated by all present that if anybody knows or has any type of relationship with an applicant, another committee member has to evaluate that application. It was decided that the applications will be distributed among committee members.

Each member reviewed and ranked the applications according to the accepted criteria. Then the Committee Members shared their first round of evaluation with the VP Finance and Operations to rank all applicants. The second revision for high ranked applications was made by another member. Following the review and cross-checking of all applications, they were sorted according to score. Committee Members finished going through the applications and ensured they get a second review.

It was mentioned that there were many qualified and deserving applicants and those who didn't receive bursaries was due to the limited number of bursaries available. 18 beneficiaries were selected from a total of 76 applications. Both successful and unsuccessful bursary applicants will be notified by July 10, 2020. It is recommended for those who were unsuccessful to apply again for the 2020 Spring/Summer Bursary.

The Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM.



University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association

Executive Meeting Minutes

July 9, 2020, 1:00 PM –3:00 PM

Present: Humaira Inam (President), Hadi Ramin (VP Finance and Operations), Carmen Marquez (VP Academic and Student Affairs), Qasim Gill (VP External Affairs).

Regrets/Absent: None

1. Call to Order / Opening Remarks

President called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

The President thanked all the executives for the effort that they have been putting into their roles up until now. She expressed that we should continue doing the best that we can under the current circumstances.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The President added an item to the agenda after item 3, to discuss the virtual event, and asked if there were any additions or amendments to the agenda as circulated. Seeing none the President asked for a:

Motion to approve the amended agenda as circulated was moved by the VP Academic Affairs and seconded by VP External. Vote: Passed.

4 in Favour. Motion Carried.

3. Approval of the June 11, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes

The President asked whether there were any further amendments to the meeting minutes for June 11, 2020, there were none.

Motion to approve the June 11, 2020 Executive Meeting Minutes was moved by the President and seconded by the VP Academic Affairs. Vote: Passed.

4 in Favour. Motion Carried.

4. Items for Action

1.1 Fall/Winter 2020/2021 Event Dates

The President wanted to confirm the event dates for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. She mentioned that some events require preparation and reaching out for sponsorships and emphasized the importance of careful planning.

The following tentative dates were proposed:

- GSA Fall Orientation: **September 3, 2020**
- Fall Wine & Cheese: **September 25, 2020**
- Halloween Social: **October 16, 23, 30 of 2020**
- Friendsgiving: **November 27, 2020**
- Holiday Party: **December 25, 2020**
- GSA Winter Orientation: **January 04, 2021**
- Winter Wine & Cheese: **January 29, 2021**
- Graduate Research Conference: **February 10 & 11, 2021**
- 3MT Competition: **March 26, 2021**
- GSA Awards Gala: **April 10, 2021**

Motion to approve the tentative Fall/Winter 2020/2021 event dates was moved by the VP Academic Affairs and seconded by the President. Vote: Passed.

4 in Favour. Motion Carried.

5. Items for Information / Discussion

5.1 Fall orientation 2020

The President discussed the cost of buying bags and swag, and the tight deadline we were under to order them so that they would be delivered in time for fall orientation. The President explained what the VP Academic and Student Affairs and she were considering ordering for the GSA orientation's swag. The President also explained the rationale behind ordering specific swag items, which was due to their reusable factor. However, the total cost was a bit more than what they initially anticipated, but it still fell within the budget that was allocated for fall orientation. The President asked the other executives for their input. The VP External asked the question, is it possible to have sponsorships from outside the university? In response, the President mentioned that it is hard to promote external companies due to additional costs of having their logos imprinted on products. Additionally, the President emphasised that the GSA should remain neutral and avoid advertising a company in our events. The VP Academic & Student Affairs said that we can have sponsors who do not want to have their logos on our merchandise, instead they could offer to give talks and presentations. The President stated that this was an agreeable solution, but it is essential to be aware of credibility of speakers and how the GSA is represented when inviting external speakers.

After some discussion, it was concluded that further information is required to move on with the decision to order swag and bags for fall orientation.

The President also asked about options for food and stated that due to COVID-19 it would not be possible to hold a barbeque this year as the GSA traditionally does for fall orientation. There was discussion among the executives about pizza, snacks, and drinks. The VP External and VP Finance were asked to compile price quotes for food items.

The President asked everyone if they have any ideas regarding orientation. The VP External suggested creating a Facebook group for fall orientation. Through this platform, student organizations could also provide short welcome videos for new incoming graduate students. The President said this idea sounded great, however inviting new graduate student might be difficult. The VP Academic mentioned that the GSA could advertise the Facebook group via CGPS or other point of contact. The President asked the VP Academic to reach out to student organizations associated with the GSA and invite them to participate in the fall orientation. The President also asked every executive to prepare a short video introducing themselves, closer to the orientation date, so students can familiarize themselves with their executives. The President asked which date would be best to form the Facebook group for welcoming graduate students, and all executives agreed on creating this as soon as possible.

5.2 Monthly Financial Expenditure Report per bylaw 5.3.1.

The President asked the VP Finance to present his financial expenditure report for the month.

The VP Finance's report was as follows:

The GSA's June 2020 ledger has been reviewed and approved.

During the month of May 2020, there were three items of revenue from the Gwenna Moss, GSA Commons booking, and the GSA spring/summer term memberships. Other expenses included banking, debit, credit fees and charges, staff salaries, executive honoraria, GSA operating costs, and financial auditing and bookkeeping costs.

5.3 Virtual Event

The President said that we had a “Coffee Break” virtual event with faith leaders on Wednesday, July 8, 2020. She was concerned about students not participating in this event, as there was zero student turnout. The President asked the executives to join her in the next event on July 15, 2020, and if they have had any ideas on how to increase student participation in this event. The executives discussed that perhaps students are oversaturated with so many online components taking place right now due to COVID-19, which may explain the low turnout for this virtual event. The President explained that, nonetheless, the GSA will continue this event until the end of July and then we will revisit and discuss how we can change up future events as needed to improve participation. The VP External stated that a Facebook group would be a great idea to advertise this event and engage students. The President responded that she has already posted the event on the GSA Facebook page, but will share it with new incoming students as well in the Facebook group that will be created.

5.4 Executive Roles and Responsibilities

The President stated that the executives need to go over the bylaws in order to ensure that they were carrying out their roles and responsibilities. The President reminded the executives that they need to reply to emails within 48 hours based on priority to ensure that urgent matters are not missed or delayed. The President also stressed that if the executives are feeling overwhelmed or require assistance, then to please reach out to her so she can be of help.

5.5 Canadian Federation of Student (CFS)

The CFS meeting is coming up and the President asked the VP External to provide information about what are their items for discussion and how they will be helping/advocating for students, especially international students. The VP External said that the next CFS meeting would be on July 17, 2020, but he has not received the agenda yet to discuss the items up for discussion. He will share the agenda among

executives once he receives the agenda. The VP External also asked the executives to let him know if they have items which they would like him to bring to the CFS meeting for discussion. The VP External stated that he will ask about the concerns regarding international students and student disability initiatives at the upcoming CFS meeting. The President said that we are paying CFS a membership fee and we want to make sure that they are advocating for students, and it is our responsibility as GSA representative to update our members about CFS activities.

5.6 Student Energy Chapters

The President discussed the email the GSA received regarding the Student Energy Chapter. The Student Energy Chapter seems to be an organization that is looking to create a student group through the GSA to promote and support initiatives related to energy. The executives agreed that it is not the GSA's responsibility to create this Chapter and that a student organization can only be ratified by the GSA if it is formulated by current USask graduate students, and as such the GSA would not be able to support this Chapter under the current circumstances.

5.7 Student Engagement and Workshops

The President asked the VP Academic and Student Affairs to provide information about student engagement. The VP Academic stated that she sent out emails to all ratified student organizations but has yet to receive a response. The President asked the VP Academic to contact other members of the GSA to confirm email addresses to ensure that these members are still active within the Council. The President also discussed workshops that the GSA could organize. The VP Academic said our main goal is to provide workshops on improving graduate students' skills for future job prospects. The President stated that currently our main focus should be on graduate student skills workshops and orientation for the fall term.

6 Other Business

The VP External discussed the “Health Chat” events which fall under his portfolio. He shared last year’s events and mentioned that this year’s may mostly be online and wanted to confirm event topics for the fall term. The VP External brought up the idea of hosting public health, financial, and human resources speakers. The President responded that we have access to the Career and Employment Centre to provide access to information on CV, job searching, interviews, etc. for students. The President also stated that inviting external speakers, although a good idea, would require checking into their credentials and credibility. The President said it might be a better idea to first reach out to resources we have available within the University. The President asked the VP External to provide more information on the “Health Chat” events and tentative dates that they would be taking place, as well as, who will be the invited speakers, and how would the VP External want to have students participate in these events. The other executives will provide information and comments on the proposed events to the VP External. The President stated that the VP External should also look into which events would require financial support.

7 Confidential Session

8 Adjournment of Meeting

The President asked if there was anything else that needed to be discussed. There was none.

Motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by the VP Academic and seconded by the VP External.

Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.



**University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association**

President's report - GSA Council Meeting, August 2020

Dear Councilors,

On behalf of the GSA executives, I would like to thank each and every one of you for taking the time and dedication on serving the GSA throughout the 2019-2020 academic year. It is due to your continued participation and commitment that the GSA has been able to provide services and advocate for graduate students here at the University of Saskatchewan. The GSA would also like to extend a special thanks to the individuals who volunteered their time for GSA events, who sat on Standing Committees, the Council Chair for her outstanding work preparing and executing Council meetings, even during these unprecedented times, and the previous and current GSA board members for their unwavering services to the GSA for 2019-2020. I hope that we continue working together with the same engagement and enthusiasm for the betterment of our student community throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.

In this report, I provide a brief explanation of initiatives that I will be focusing on during my tenure, which are as follows:

1. Improving Resources for Mental Health

As discussed in the June 2020 Council meeting, the GSA will continue to build on the work of previous executives with regards to improving accessibility and resources for mental health. As such, we are pleased to announce that the GSA will be enhancing mental health services by continuing to provide "Empower Me" for all University of Saskatchewan graduate students for the 2020-2021 fiscal year at no additional cost to students. Additionally, the GSA has also increased coverage for psychologist sessions per visit to 80% under the health insurance plan for 2020-2021, with no additional cost to students.

2. Student-Supervisor Agreement & Relationship

The GSA executives and I would like to continue to promote a healthy relationship between students and supervisors through the mandatory use of the Student-Supervisor agreement across Colleges and Schools at the University of Saskatchewan. We would like to express our sincere thanks to previous GSA executives who worked hard for many years to make this possible. The GSA is pleased to announce that as of May 2020 the Student-Supervisor agreement is now mandatory for all new INCOMING graduate students and should be completed by all students. We also encourage continuing students to complete the student-supervisor agreement with their supervisor in order to have a baseline of understanding about their goals and expectations. You can find this document [HERE](#).

Additionally, the GSA executives would like to further improve on the student-supervisor relationship by promoting mental health training for supervisors. We will be working closely with Dr. Burshtyn, CGPS Dean, on this initiative.

3. Previous Initiatives – Impact of COVID-19

We are still engaged with previous initiatives and are participating in the organization of activities around campus, albeit in a virtual format now. Due to COVID-19, activities on campus and the GSA events are impacted as we are unable to provide events in the same format as before. The GSA executives had finalized dates for upcoming fall term events, however, as we are still amidst this pandemic, we will be revisiting those events and reorganizing so they can be offered in a safe format. We will continue to provide, organize, and initiate events that can be executed in a contact-less or social distanced way in order to ensure the health and safety of everyone.

4. Executive Meeting

The GSA executives held their meeting on July 9, 2020. The next meeting is on August 13, 2020.

In conclusion, we will continue to advocate for the best interest of our graduate students, and I look forward to working with each and every one of you in the upcoming year as we continue to assist our graduate students during these unique times.

Thank you,

Humaira Inam

President, Graduate Students' Association

President's Video report can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/KwoJwMYK0pQ>



Monthly Report from the VP Finance and Operations (August 2020)

Hello GSA members,

I am pleased to provide you an update on my activities as the current Vice-President Finance and Operations.

1) GSA Winter Bursary Update

Eighteen (18) bursary recipients were selected for the spring/summer term. Both successful and unsuccessful recipients were contacted on July 10, 2020. I thank the Bursary Selection Committee members for being very active throughout the review process which helped in the timely selection of bursary recipients in the spring/summer term. Due to the closure of the GSA common, it was decided to ask recipients if they would like to have their cheques delivered within Saskatoon. Nine (9) recipients opted for delivery and I delivered the cheques to their addresses.

2) Closure of GSA Commons

Due to COVID-19, the GSA Commons is closed. Communication with the GSA Main Office is being conducted via the Office manager's email address (gsa.admn@usask.ca). We have also been maintaining our social media accounts and we encourage all students to check our pages on a regular basis for any further updates. The Executives remain available and reachable through email at this critical time.

Additionally, I continue to sit on various committees to improve the graduate student's experience on and off campus. Some of the meetings are listed below:

Meeting

PRT/PEC/USSU/GSA Meeting

GSA Executive Meeting

Bursary Selection Committee meeting

Please feel free to contact me at gsa.fin@usask.ca should you have any questions or need any further clarification.

Sincerely,

Hadi Ramin

Vice-President Finance and Operations

Graduate Students' Association

Email: gsa.fin@usask.ca | Web: <https://gsa.usask.ca/>

Facebook: UsaskGSA | Twitter: GSA_USask | Instagram: GSA_Usask

Address: 1337 College Dr, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0W6

The VP Finance and Operation's Video report can be accessed here:

<https://youtu.be/I0D7Gj1ONNI>



Graduate Students' Association
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August 2020

RE: VP Academic and Student Affairs Report to Council

Dear Council Members:

Please find below my June-July report to council.

1) Fall Orientation

As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the University's restrictions on campus for the safety of students, the GSA will not be holding an in-person Fall 2020 orientation. Instead, we will be collaborating with CGPS and providing an orientation in an online format and offering curbside pick-up of swag bags. More information regarding orientation will be released closer to the start of the term. At this point, the promotional items have been delivered along with the CFS agendas.

In previous years we have had student groups joining us in the Bowl, but given the unprecedented circumstances we are at, it is impossible to follow that system this year. The idea I have been pitching in my meetings with the councillors and student groups is to record a 2 min video where each group could welcome their new students. If you are interested in doing so, please email the videos to me (gsa.sa@usask.ca). Please keep in mind to use inclusive and respectful language in your videos. For those groups wanting to participate at Orientation, please send a ratification package to the Office Manager (gsa.admn@usask.ca) before August 30th at 5:00PM.

More information about the documents necessary for the ratifications can be found at the GSA website. During these weeks, I will keep on working on purchasing the food for Orientation and sorting out the details for the event, finalizing any last-minute details needed.

2) VP Academic and Council-Student groups meetings

Given that one of the main focuses of my portfolio for the VP Student and Academic Affairs this year is effective and active communication with our student groups, I have started the first round of meetings with our student groups' leaders. Thank you for your attention and diligence. I will send out a second call to reach out to the groups which have not responded yet and I hope to be able to communicate and gather any relevant information and feedback.

The VP Academic and Student Affairs' Video report can be accessed here:

<https://youtu.be/6I8cMTHnLgs>



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August 2020

RE: VP External Affairs' Report to Council

Dear Council Members,

Please find below my first report to council:

1) GSA Executive Meeting

I attended the GSA executive meeting on July 9, 2020 where we discussed future initiatives and goals, and how they could be impacted by COVID-19. We actively discussed fall term events and set tentative dates, we coordinated plans for fall orientation and brainstormed various ideas that we could implement to make orientation more engaging.

2) Canadian Federation of Students

I attended the CFS (Canadian Federation of Students) standalone meeting via zoom on July 17th, 2020. The duration of the meeting was 5 hours. The meeting started with an introduction of each locals. The main focus of that meeting was on Graduate Students' Mental Health project "Mental Health Toolkit" (see Appendix A) and the aim of this project is to equip graduate students' associations to build, evaluate, and improve the state of graduate students' mental health, as well as offer mental health programs and services on-campus to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. This toolkit provides supportive and accessible tools both online and in print to individual graduate students.

Another agenda item was the campaign for “Know Your Rights”. This campaign is intended to empower students with knowledge of their rights and provide strategies on how they can tackle these issues. As the representative of local 101 I provided my input in general, but particularly I focused and asked the questions about CFS’s activities and initiatives for international students and their concerns during the pandemic. I also discussed the concerns expressed by students regarding disability. At the end of the meeting, I was connected to a CFS representative who advocates for students with disabilities and we will be discussing initiatives that we can improve and work on for the upcoming fiscal year.

3) **Health Chat Events**

As VP External, I am preparing a list of health chat events for the fall and winter terms.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 most of the event may be conducted online in order to ensure the health and safety of our students. These health chat events and ideas will be discussed at our next executive meeting in more detail.

4) **Social media and Interaction with Graduate Students**

We continue to update graduate students on social media about GSA initiatives. We recently created a Facebook group for new incoming graduate students so we can engage them on our online platform to meet other graduate students, and to inform them of relevant information pertaining to their academic journey.

5) Meetings

The following are a list of meetings I have attended since I submitted my first report to council.

Date	Meetings
June 23, 2020	Planning Committee meeting
June 24, 2020	Interdisciplinary Committee meeting
June 25, 2020	Health-Dental Benefits meeting with GSA Executives
June 30, 2020	PRT/PEC/USSU/GSA meeting
July 6, 2020	Planning Committee meeting
July 9, 2020	GSA Executive meeting
July 14, 2020	PRT/PEC/USSU/GSA meeting
July 15, 2020	GSA Executive meeting with Dr. Burshtyn (CGPS Dean)
July 17, 2020	Canadian Federation of Students

The VP External Affairs' Video report can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/Xvwbr-U4jk>

GRADUATE STUDENTS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING: A TOOLKIT

National Graduate Caucus – Canadian Federation of Students



GRADUATE STUDENTS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING: A TOOLKIT

The National Graduate Caucus (NGC) of the Canadian Federation of Students engaged in a one-year research project to develop a graduate student mental health toolkit. This toolkit aims to equip graduate students' communities to evaluate and improve the state of graduate students' mental health and wellbeing at post-secondary institutions in Canada.

We realize and acknowledge that any meaningful initiative for an effective mental health strategy on Canadian campuses requires structural reforms, decolonization and indigenization of the post-secondary education system in Canada. We need to reimagine and work towards a post-secondary education system that is free for all, and better meets the needs of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and all other different groups on campuses. While the Canadian Federation of Students continues to fight for these changes, this toolkit intends to help to resist the existing structures and institutions in place.

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1.1 WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT ABOUT?

This toolkit contains tools and resources for evaluating and improving the state of graduate students' mental health and wellbeing at post-secondary institutions in Canada. It is particularly designed to help post-secondary institutions and Graduate Students Associations (GSA) to build and improve their capacity for offering mental health programs and services on campuses and to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. It further provides initial support with clear, accessible and relevant tools both online and in print to individual graduate students.

1.2 WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit has been primarily developed for graduate students' unions and member locals of the Canadian Federation of Students who play the important role of supporting their peers in navigating mental health services and safe spaces on campus. Components of the toolkit may also be useful for post-secondary institutions, including staff at Student Health and Counselling Offices, Accessibility Offices, Campus Health and Wellness Centers and/or other offices on campus that are responsible for running and delivering mental health programs and services to observe gaps in institutional tools and student services. The toolkit is also aimed at individual graduate students who may also find this source useful (i.e., general mental health education as well as the resource guides and contact numbers in Chapters 5 and 6 in particular). Others who might find this toolkit useful include groups that are involved in mental health work on campus. This may also include academic staff or researchers interested in service models or administrators on campus who are invested in strategy, planning and/or policy relative to the mental health and addictions needs of their student population.

1.3 HOW IS THIS TOOLKIT USED?

This toolkit is structured to facilitate easy access to key information and tools that can be used in evaluating and developing mental health programs on campuses. It includes four major sections: evaluating mental health at your institutions, tools for institutional use, tools for GSA/community use and, tools for individuals use. Each section includes an explanation of the subject matter, offers some practical tools and worksheets that can be used to support your work and highlights select case examples to illustrate how the information can be applied in a different setting. Links to further resources are also included at the end of each section.

This toolkit is a free resource that can be accessed through the Canadian Federation of Students website (<https://www.cfs-fcee.ca/>).

1.4 WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THIS TOOLKIT?

The goal of this toolkit is to provide users with a one-stop-shop to tools, resources, and best practice recommendations for improving and maintaining graduate students' mental health and wellbeing in the post-secondary setting. Furthermore, the suggestions within this toolkit should serve as a starting point or a supplement but shouldn't hinder the collective and radical imagination of different groups on campuses from utilizing their unique grassroots strategies for executing their plans.

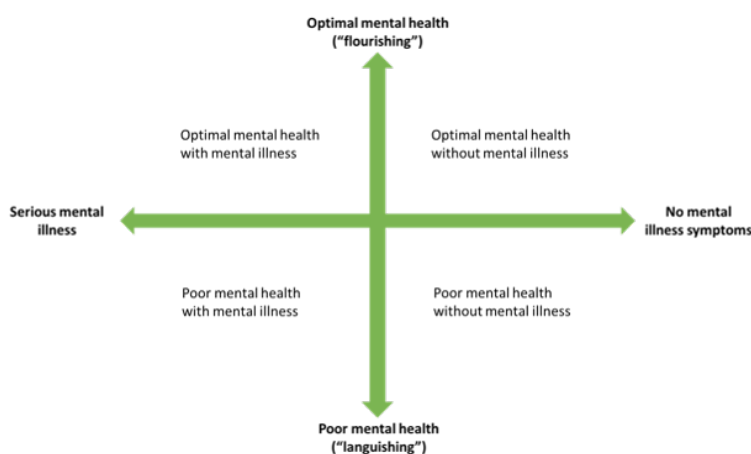
2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM

In recent years, concerns surrounding the mental health of post-secondary students have increased, with national, cross-sectional surveys revealing a high prevalence of stress, symptoms of psychological distress, and diagnosed mental illnesses among students¹. Mental health is traditionally defined as more than just simply the absence of a mental illness, but an integral part of health which we all share. The World Health Organization argues that mental health is “a state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and can make a contribution to his or her community”².

Often, the terms “mental health” and “mental illness” are used interchangeably, but this is inappropriate. “Mental illness” implies that a person has received a clinical diagnosis, or is experiencing clinically significant symptoms of a mental illness. It is important to note that it is possible for an individual to be experiencing symptoms of general psychological distress without experiencing a mental illness. In other words, we all have mental health, but we do not all have a mental illness.

In 2006, Corey Keyes introduced his dual-continuum of mental health³, an important tool for understanding the difference between what he refers to as “languishing” and “flourishing” (Figure 1). This model has since been adopted and endorsed by leading mental health professionals across North America. In this model, a person experiencing optimal mental health is “flourishing” in life, while a person experiencing poor mental health is “languishing.” This model clearly demonstrates how it is possible for an individual to experience poor (or “languishing”) mental health, but not a mental illness. Similarly, it is also possible for an individual who is experiencing optimal (or “flourishing”) mental health to be experiencing, but effectively managing, a mental illness. This is an important message for recovery.

Figure 1. Keyes' Dual-Continuum of Mental Health and Mental Illness



Mental health is complex, and can be affected by social, psychological, and biological factors. Certain things can place individuals at increased risk for experiencing a deterioration in their mental health and the development of a mental illness. For example, some mental illnesses carry a genetic component, meaning that a family history of mental illness may increase your risk of developing a mental illness yourself (i.e., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder)⁴. However, the evidence of genetic links to mental illnesses remains relatively limited, with leaders in the field looking forward to the future of genomics and neuroscience in mental health research⁵.

In most cases, risk factors for poor mental health and the development of mental illnesses are socio-environmental in nature. These risk factors can take many forms, including social (i.e., lack of social support, isolation) and psychological (i.e., continued exposure to stressful situations). Some risk factors for mental illness are structural in nature (i.e., poverty, discrimination), while others are more personal and can occur in a person's regular day-to-day (i.e., stressful situations or conditions at work, home, or school).

2.2 CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST

Post-secondary students may be at increased risk for mental health deterioration due to the multitude of stressors experienced within the post-secondary setting. While some degree of stress is to be expected and can sometimes even improve performance, chronic stress is highly correlated with negative mental health outcomes^{6,7} and has been shown to have a negative impact on students' academic achievement¹. As a result, it is important for institutions to evaluate not only the mental health of students, but also the degree to which services and supports are provided to students to foster a mentally healthy campus. The following three sections comprise a basic “checklist” for institutions to consider:

2.2.1 MONITORING STUDENTS MENTAL HEALTH

In order to effectively target mental health service and supports on campus, institutions are encouraged to participate in the regular surveillance of their students' mental health. This can be done through several avenues, including opting in to the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment Survey (www.acha.org/NCHA/NCHA_home), which includes both physical and mental health indicators and is conducted among participating Canadian post-secondary institutions every three years. To date, this is the most complete data available on the Canadian students' mental health and wellbeing of students in Canada.

More recently, a research group out of the University of British Columbia has been developing the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS), designed specifically to evaluate mental health indicators on post-secondary campuses (<https://www.ccws-becc.ca/>)⁸. Finally, the Post-Secondary Student Stressors Index (PSSI) is an instrument created by Dr. Brooke Linden at Queen's University, designed to evaluate the sources of post-secondary student stress and better inform mental health services and supports on Canadian campuses⁹.

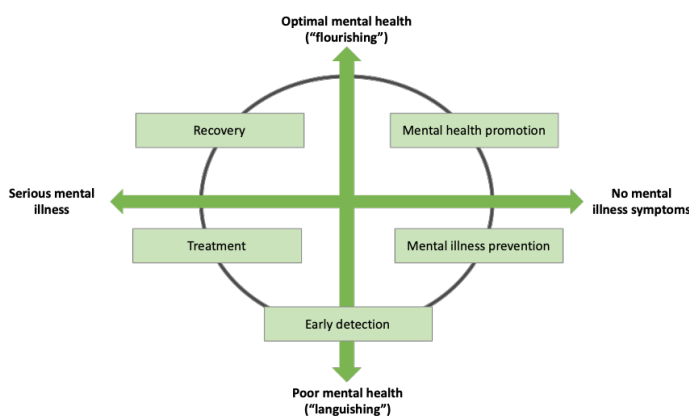
<input type="checkbox"/>	REGULAR SURVEILLANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH INDICATORS FOR STUDENTS ON CAMPUS
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2.2.2 THE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE CONTINUUM

The majority of post-secondary institutions offer a number of mental health services and supports. However, offerings are not consistent across campuses. One tool that can assist institutions in determining whether they are offering a holistic set of services and supports is the Mental Health Service Continuum. This continuum proposes five categories of service delivery, with each serving an important purpose. Figure 2 demonstrates where each of these categories of service delivery fits into the Keyes' continuum of mental health and illness.

In 2016, Jaworska and colleagues conducted a cross-sectional survey of over 168 publicly funded Canadian post-secondary institutions regarding their campus mental health services¹⁰. The results of this study indicated that the most frequently offered services and supports at institutions included mental health promotion services (73%) and counselling/treatment services (91%), with much less focus laid on mental illness prevention, early detection, and recovery.

Figure 2. Mental Health Service Continuum within the Keyes' Dual Continuum



Mental Health Promotion

Services and supports that fall under this category enable individuals to develop the skills and tools required to improve (and maintain) their overall health and wellness, with a focus laid on the determinants of health ¹¹. Promotion activities fall within the upper right-hand quadrant of the Keyes' continuum (no symptoms of mental illness and optimal ("flourishing") mental health).

Mental health promotion activities at institutions range widely in nature. This may include helping individuals to learn to maintain healthy behaviours (i.e., physical activity, healthy cooking and nutrition, healthy sleep habits), how to effectively manage and cope with daily stressors (i.e., time management workshops), and how to cultivate and maintain strong social support networks and supportive relationships.

<input type="checkbox"/>	MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
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Mental Illness Prevention

Mental illness prevention efforts aim to reduce the prevalence of mental illnesses by reducing risk factors. The goal of this "primary prevention" approach is to provide services and supports before the onset of symptoms. Prevention activities fall within the lower, right-hand quadrant of the Keyes' continuum (no mental illness symptoms and poor ("languishing") mental health). It is important to note that mental health promotion and mental illness prevention are often interrelated and overlapping activities ¹². As a result, many mental health promotion activities often include elements of mental illness prevention, achieving different, but complementary outcomes. For example, peer support networks at post-secondary institutions are often viewed as a mental health promotion service (i.e., promoting mental wellbeing by ensuring students have a strong peer-to-peer social support resource), but may also serve as a prevention service (i.e., offering students a strong peer-to-peer resource in times of excessive stress when they may not otherwise reach out).

<input type="checkbox"/>	MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
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Early Detection

Where mental illness prevention (or "primary prevention") aims to deliver services and supports before the development of symptoms of a mental illness, early detection (or "secondary prevention") involves intervention as soon as possible following the development of symptoms. Early detection activities fall within the lower half of the Keyes' continuum (poor ("languishing") mental health, with either symptoms of a mental illness or a mental illness).

To date, few post-secondary institutions offer dedicated early detection services and supports, instead relying on self-referral for help-seeking ¹⁰. It is possible that this stems from the fact that many institutions find themselves overwhelmed with the demand for treatment services, and are therefore reluctant to incorporate additional programming that may increase that demand. Ironically, early detection programming is intended to result in a decrease in the prevalence of mental illness on campus by catching cases of mental illness early, prior to them becoming severe and more difficult to treat.

<input type="checkbox"/>	EARLY DETECTION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
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Treatment

During the treatment phase, mental illnesses are treated until individuals move forward into recovery. While symptoms are treated in the early detection stage, treatment most often begins when a mental illness has reached a diagnosable point, or when symptoms have reached a clinical level. Treatment activities fall within the lower, left-hand quadrant of the Keyes' continuum (mental illness and poor ("languishing") mental health). The vast majority of post-secondary institutions in Canada offer some form of treatment services and supports ¹⁰, including counselling and psychotherapy offered by mental health professionals.

<input type="checkbox"/>	TREATMENT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
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Recovery

Recovery constitutes the ongoing management of a mental illness over the course of one's life. Recovery supports and services focus on helping individuals to live stable, productive lives and foster strong social support networks to maintain resiliency and effectively manage their mental illness. Recovery and mental health promotions activities share much in common, with the main difference being that recovery services lie in the upper left-hand quadrant of the Keyes' continuum (a well-managed mental illness paired with optimal ("flourishing") mental health).

In a post-secondary context, recovery services might be the provision of referrals or connections to services and supports in the broader community. Several post-secondary institutions have begun to explore partnerships with community services, particularly in cases where a student's need for treatment exceeds the number of sessions or time a post-secondary counsellor can spend on a single client



Upstream vs. Downstream Services

Traditionally, health services are further (and more broadly) categorized as being either "upstream" or "downstream" in nature. In the context of mental health, upstream services are those that take place before the onset of mental illness (i.e., mental health promotion and mental illness prevention). Downstream services are those that take place following the onset of symptoms, or the development of a mental illness (i.e., early detection, treatment, and recovery).

It is important for holistic service provision to include both upstream and downstream approaches. Traditionally, post-secondary environments have laid the majority of focus and funding on downstream approaches (i.e., treatment). In fact, Jaworska and colleagues' 2016 study revealed that while the majority of institutions offered some form of mental health promotion programming, many respondents felt that these were not a good use of resources ¹⁰.

However, a shift towards a renewed investment in upstream services has begun in recent years. It is important to recognize that improving upstream approaches, including mental health promotion and mental illness prevention, may help to alleviate both the burden of mental health problems among student populations as well as the demand currently placed on overtaxed campus treatment services. That being said, the provision of downstream services should not be altogether abandoned, as these are necessary to taking a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing on campus.



2.2.3 EVALUATION OF SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Another important component of service delivery on campus is to ensure that these services and supports are working as intended (i.e., are effectively achieving your goals) and are not doing any harm. Formal evaluation of the workshops and training opportunities provided by your institution is highly recommended. While program evaluation is a field of research in and of itself, formal evaluation of the programs offered on campus doesn't necessarily need to be complicated. Here, we have outlined six simple steps to evaluation. For more detailed information, the Centres for Disease Control provides a series of online tools, free of charge (www.cdc.gov/eval/resources/index.htm), while more detailed program evaluation and dissemination guides are available on PREVnet (www.prevnet.ca/resources/program-dissemination-and-evaluation). Finally, Public Health Ontario offers a ten-step guide to conducting an evaluation (www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/at-a-glance-10step-evaluation.pdf?la=en).

Step 1) Determine the goal and objective(s) of your workshop/training

Goals are more overarching in nature, while objectives are more specific and measurable. A goal is a broad statement about the long-term expectations for your program or service (i.e., a reduction in mental illnesses among students on campus). Objectives are more narrow statements describing the desired results to be achieved and the manner in which they will be achieved.

Step 2) Determine how best to quantify the specific outcome(s) you're interested in

Once you have clearly stated objectives, the next step is to determine the best way to measure whether or not an objective is being met – in other words, determine what outcomes you are interested in. For example, if an objective for a mental health promotion service is to reduce student stress, this might be measured by asking participants to take a screening test for stress before and after the workshop/presentation, etc. and observing whether scores improve. Outcomes may be separated into those that are short-term (proximal) and long-term (distal). Remember that measures like 'number of people who attend the workshop' can be useful in terms of determining program uptake, but don't actually tell you much about whether or not the program or service is working the way you intended.

Step 3) Draft a logic model of how you expect your program/service to function

A logic model is a graphical representation of the logical flow of your program or service. It resembles a flowchart, and is a useful method of mapping out the steps required to meet your ultimate goal. Logic models typically include the following components: inputs (what you are going to need in order to provide this service, such as money and staffing); activities (the things your service will provide, such as workshops, or educational materials); and outcomes (both short- and long-term).



Step 4) Determine and execute an evaluation plan

Now that you have articulated how your program or service is intended to achieve your goals, the next step is to determine the best way to evaluate whether or not it is working. The simplest, and most common method of evaluation is to perform a pre-test/post-test survey evaluation. Surveys are not costly to administer, and typically receive good response rates (the number of people who participate) if done in person before and after the workshop or service. Online surveys can also be conducted with even fewer costs, but often receive lower response rates. For longer term evaluations, you may also be able to observe before and after differences in your institution's student wellness services administrative data (i.e., reduction in the number of students seeking help for stress, anxiety, or other mental health issues among those who have attended a wellness workshop on campus).

Step 5) Report the findings

Finally, reporting the findings of your evaluation is an important last step that should not be skipped! While your institution may choose to keep this report internal to the organization, it is encouraged to publicly post evaluation results so that other institutions can learn from what you have achieved. Lastly, while it can be tempting to avoid reporting the less exciting findings of your evaluation (or even "bad" results), remember that it can be just as important to share mistakes. Avoiding this publication bias (or the tendency to only want to publish the "good" results) means that others may avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Acknowledging the things that didn't work so well also provides your institution with ready-made goals for improvement upon offered programs and services.

<input type="checkbox"/>	FORMAL EVALUATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, WORKSHOPS, AND PROGRAMS OFFERED
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Please note that while this section is intended to provide institutions with a general idea of the "boxes" that might be checked as they move towards ensuring a mentally health campus, it is important to that there are more comprehensive guiding frameworks available specifically designed to assist institutions with identifying gaps and areas for improvement in mental health service delivery on campus (see Chapter 3 of this Toolkit).

2.3 Listening to Graduate Students

In addition to participating in the regular surveillance of students' mental health indicators (i.e., a 'whole campus' approach), it is also important for institutions to recognize that different groups within their student body may have unique needs of their own.

While some stressors and mental health challenges may be experienced by students at all levels of study (i.e., financial concerns), graduate students are a subgroup on campus with unique needs of their own. Individuals enrolled in graduate studies are typically older, more mature students, with more life experience than an average undergraduate

student. As a result, many major stressors for undergraduate students (i.e., having to cook meals, learning to manage an academic workload, adjusting to a new, autonomous lifestyle at university or college) do not apply to graduate students, while new stressors emerge on their wake. Additionally, graduate students tend to fill various roles on campus, including student, researcher, teacher, and mentor for more junior students. Each of these roles produces stressors of its own.

The CFS-Ontario report, *Not in the Syllabus*, describes the results of an Ontario-wide survey conducted at 21 institutions to determine the most salient sources of stress and poor mental health in graduate students. Participants identified several factors that affected their mental health, including: bullying and harassment, time to completion anxiety, pressure to finish degree, fear of failure, and lack of support from academic institution ¹³. Among the most prevalent factors that fell within the category of bullying and harassment (experienced or witnessed) were: verbal abuse (71%), pressure to overwork (70%), undermining behaviours (63%), sexism (55%), and racism (49%).

Given that graduate students' experiences are not necessarily equal to the experiences of other groups on campus, institutions should strive to empower smaller groups or societies on campus dedicated to serving the graduate student population (i.e., Society of Graduate and Professional Studies, Graduate Student Services, etc.) to conduct their own, more in-depth, investigations into graduate students' mental health needs. Empowering these groups to more closely monitor graduate students will allow institutions to obtain a "deeper dive" and clearer picture of the specific needs of graduate students, and therefore better support them.

CHAPTER 3 : INSTITUTIONAL TOOLS

In this section, you will find guidelines that can assist post-secondary institutions with developing a mental health promoting campus. Section 3.1 emphasizes the importance of mental health awareness and education, with recommendations as to how to make improvements in this area at both the institutional level, as well as the student level. Section 3.2 outlines a series of guiding frameworks to assist institutions in developing comprehensive mental health strategies. Section 3.3 provides a selection of examples of existing mental health services and supports at post-secondary institutions.

3.1 MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

3.1.1 IMPROVING INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS

Improving institutional awareness of mental health related issues is imperative in order to effectively target the mental health services and supports offered by the institution. Institutional awareness can be improved through the following four avenues.



CCWS
BECC

Surveillance of Post-Secondary Mental Health

Understanding the state of mental health and illness on one's individual campus, as well as among the broader student population in Canada is an important first step to improving overall institutional awareness. This can be achieved through the use of resources such as the National College Health Assessment Survey (NCHA), conducted every three years among Canadian post-secondary students. The NCHA Survey contains over 300 questions evaluating both physical and mental health indicators. Institutions interested in participating must opt-in to the survey for a fee via the American College Health Association (www.acha.org).

As an alternative to the NCHA, institutions may also be interested in participating in the Canadian Campus Wellbeing Survey (CCWS), currently in development at the University of British Columbia. The CCWS is Canadian-made and focuses on helping institutions to better support student health and wellbeing. Interested institutions can sign up now to take part in the 2020-2021 deployment of the CCWS (www.ccws-becc.ca).

Finally, campuses should examine regular reports from their Student Wellness Services Department to remain informed about the mental health challenges students are experiencing most frequently. These records should be anonymized in order to protect students' confidentiality. Tracking this information can help institutions to improve the targeting of their mental health promotion and mental illness prevention activities year over year.



Post-Secondary Student Stressors Index

Understanding Stressors

Aside from obtaining a clear picture of the state of post-secondary students' mental health and tracking the most commonly experienced mental illnesses on campus, understanding the factors that contribute to students' overall mental health and wellbeing is also important.

Students experience a multitude of stressors during their time in post-secondary education. The link between chronic stress and mental health deterioration has been well established in previous research, while a connection between chronic stress and poor academic performance has also been suggested. In order to combat stressors and best align mental health promotion and mental illness prevention services and supports, institutions must first have a clear understanding of the stressors on their campus, including what causes stress for undergraduate students versus graduate students. The Post-Secondary Student Stressors Index (PSSI) was created to fill this gap, and is available for use at no cost through Dr. Brooke Linden (brooke.linden@queensu.ca).

The PSSI is a 46-item inventory of stressors covering five domains of stress: academics, learning environment,

acknowledgement.

C) Mental Health First Aid Canada

Mental Health First Aid (www.mhfa.ca) is a nationally recognized program that aims to improve mental health literacy, and provide the skills and knowledge to help people better manage mental health problems in themselves, a family member, a friend, or a colleague. The program teaches people to: recognize signs and symptoms of mental health problems, provide initial help, and guide a person towards appropriate professional help. Typical delivery is two 12-hour sessions over a two-day period. Participants are awarded with a certificate for completion of the program. A MHFA one-hour “refresher” course is also offered for those who have already taken the full program.

Planning Action on Campus

There are several resources available to institutions who are interested in developing a mental health action plan on campus, including:

- **The JED Foundation Mental Health Action Planning Tool**
(www.jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/campus-mental-health-action-planning-jed-guide.pdf)
- **The Healthy Universities Self-Review Tool**
(www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk/toolkit-and-resources/self-review-tool/).

Both of these tools provide guidance on developing a “whole system approach” to campus mental health and wellbeing. The JED Foundation’s planning tool includes strategies for promoting mental health and preventing mental illness, including increasing help-seeking, identifying students at risk, and preventing self-harm and suicide. The Healthy Universities Self-Review Tool offers case studies from post-secondary institutions who have implemented whole campus health policies and initiatives, which institutions may use as a jumping off point.

3.1.2 IMPROVING STUDENT AWARENESS

While improving the overall institution’s mental health education and awareness, it is also important to ensure that students are similarly educated and well-informed regarding mental health and mental illness. While recent calls have been made to improve mental health education at the secondary level ¹⁴, many students are arriving at post-secondary education (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels) with limited knowledge in this area.

Mandatory Mental Health Education

While many institutions offer mental health promotion services including mental health education, it is unlikely that every graduate student is being exposed to this valuable information. Some institutions have adopted a model whereby mental health training is incorporated as a component of the mandatory training students must take to hold a Teaching Assistant (TA) position. As TA positions are often included in many graduate student funding packages, this may be one way to ensure that many graduate students are exposed to mental health education. However, since not all graduate students will hold a TA position, another feasible option to ensure the widest audience is being reached may be to incorporate mandatory mental health education training as a component of graduate students’ orientation weeks.

Stigma Reduction

There are two main types of mental illness-related stigma: public stigma, and self-stigma.

Public stigma refers to the discrimination and stereotyping of individuals living with a mental illness, while self-stigma refers to the internalization of these negative stereotypes about oneself¹⁵. Individuals who experience stigma (either public or self-stigma) are significantly less likely to seek help for mental health related issues, which can lead to the development of severe mental illnesses ¹⁶. In several studies, students have identified stigma as a primary barrier to help seeking ^{17–20}, often citing concerns about confidentiality ^{21,22} which go hand-in-hand with perceptions of stigma.

Additionally, research has shown that mental illness-related stigma is stronger among particular subgroups of the post-secondary population. Male students, for example, tend to express a strong reluctance to seek help for mental health related challenges, and report intense stigmatization associated with men’s emotional health ^{18,21,23}. Additionally, students belonging to cultures that emphasize health as a private, personal matter experience more

self-stigma, and therefore seek help much less frequently than their peers ²⁴⁻²⁶.

Stigma reduction is therefore imperative to promoting a healthy campus environment and is identified as such in several existing campus mental health strategies. Importantly, there may already be groups on your campus working to combat stigma. One such group is Jack.org, a non-profit organization that empowers student leaders to change the conversation around mental health and advocate for de-stigmatization and mental health promotion among post-secondary students. In addition to student-led initiatives like Jack.org, many institutions have begun to implement a “mental health week” (or “thrive” week) to support student mental health and reduce stigma.

Cultural Sensitivity

Over the past decade, the proportion of international students studying at Canadian post-secondary institutions has dramatically increased ²⁷, with numbers continuing to climb as institutions strive to grow their international student cohorts ²⁸. However, along with this strategy comes the responsibility for institutions to acknowledge that international students may have unique needs compared to domestic students. It is vital that institutions be able to effectively answer the call for culturally sensitive and diverse student wellness services and treatment options, as well as work to educate domestic students in the areas of cultural sensitivity, diversity, and equity.

First Nations students within the post-secondary community have also been identified as being particularly at risk for the development of mental health issues ^{29,30}, and have unique needs of their own. The First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework is an educational resource for institutions and students alike to improve their cultural competency regarding the perceptions of mental health and holistic well being among First Nations ³¹. Included in this framework is the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum, a model based in culture and comprised of several foundational elements to supporting First Nations mental wellness, highlighting the interconnection between mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional behaviour.

3.2 ADOPTION OF A COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

There are a number of resources available to assist post-secondary institutions with developing a comprehensive mental health strategy. The following initiatives listed here are available for free, and can provide institutions with a guiding framework from which to work.

The Okanagan Charter

In 2015, experts representing educational institutions and health organizations from over 45 countries came together to collaborate on the development of the Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges ³². The Okanagan Charter is a framework which provides institutions with a common language and principles to become a health and wellbeing promoting campus. The Charter outlines two main calls to action: 1) to embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates; and 2) to lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally. The Charter is available for public download from the University of British Columbia (<https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/53926/items/1.0132754>).

The Okanagan Charter is endorsed by several national and global leaders in mental health and wellness, including the World Health Organization, CACUSS, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and Healthy Minds, Healthy campuses. As of January 2020, 21 institutions have adopted the Charter.

National Standard for the Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students

In 2017, the Mental Health Commission of Canada began overseeing the development of Canada’s National Standard for the Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students (“the Standard”). The Standard, funded by Bell Canada, RBC Canada, and the Rossy Family Foundation strives to provide post-secondary institutions with a set of voluntary guidelines designed to achieve the following goals:

- Raise awareness and decrease stigma around mental health;

- Increase access to student supports, both on and off campus;
- Promote life and resiliency skills students can use at school, work, and in daily life;
- Provide healthier and safer institutional environments; and
- Improve opportunities for student success.

The Standard is set for release in 2020, and was developed in consultation with hundreds of subject matter experts, including researchers, mental health professionals, and students. For further information on the Standard, visit the Mental Health Commission of Canada (<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/studentstandard>).

Health Promoting University and Colleges Network

This network, initiated in 2016, aims to engage institutions of higher education to advance the health-promoting campuses movement within Canada. The network is accessible online (<https://healthpromotingcampuses.squarespace.com>).

In addition to resources for developing a comprehensive mental health strategy, the network also provides links to post-secondary institutions across Canada that have made commitments towards actively promoting health and wellbeing on their campuses. In light of the increased awareness of mental health related challenges among post-secondary students, several Canadian campuses have developed their own comprehensive, campus-wide wellness frameworks. Many of these frameworks incorporate principles outlined in the previously listed initiatives, and are inclusive of both staff and student wellness, acknowledging that in order to best support students, the mental health of post-secondary staff and faculty must also be considered.

3.3 EXAMPLES OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

This section provides examples of existing campus support services at post-secondary institutions across Canada. Services and supports are categorized into subsections as per the Mental Health Service Continuum introduced in Chapter 2. The goal of this section is to provide institutions with models of existing services and supports within each category of service delivery that may be adapted or expanded upon.

3.2.1 PROMOTION AND PREVENTION

Mental Health Education

The majority of post-secondary institutions provide workshops and/or downloadable resources on general mental health education, available to all students for free. Common topics include: general mental health knowledge, recognizing symptoms of poor mental health, how to support a peer who might be struggling with their mental health, anti-stigma education, how to develop personal resiliency, alcohol and substance use education, and official Mental Health First Aid courses (which may be associated with a fee). Some institutions offer specific workshops for international students, Indigenous students, and other student sub groups.

INSTITUTION	EXAMPLE
University of Ottawa	Health Promotion Services on Campus (mental/physical) https://www.uottawa.ca/health/students
Brock University	Wellness Tips and Resources https://brocku.ca/mental-health/wellness/
Western University	Mental Health Resource Guide for Students https://www.uwo.ca/health/MHVRG2018.pdf

Healthy Living and Self-Care

Many institutions also offer health promotion workshops that focus on elements of physical health, including healthy eating (e.g., cooking classes and nutritional guidance), making time for physical activity, smoking cessation, and healthy sleep strategies. Given the interrelation of mental and physical health, it is important for health promotion activities to educate students about both.

INSTITUTION	EXAMPLE
Queen's University	Peer Health Educator Workshops (physical health) https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/health-promotion/peer-health-educators/workshops
University of British Columbia	Sleep for Success https://students.ubc.ca/health/health-topics/sleep-success Food and Nutrition https://students.ubc.ca/health/health-topics/food-nutrition

Mental Health Awareness Campaigns

Many post-secondary institutions across Canada host week-long mental health awareness campaigns to support student wellness. These “mental health weeks,” or “thrive” weeks, include mental health education, workshops and activities, and often are designed to coincide with events like Bell Let's Talk Day or stressful periods, such as the week leading up to exams.

INSTITUTION	EXAMPLE
Simon Fraser University	Thrive Week at SFU https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/events-and-workshops/thrive-week.html
McMaster University	Thrive Week at McMaster https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/thriveweek/
Western University	Bell Let's Talk Week 2020 https://www.csmh.uwo.ca/resources/bell-lets-talk.html

Coping Resources

Many post-secondary institutions offer a series of coping resources for students, designed to build resilience. At some institutions, this may take the form of activities or workshops for tools like mindfulness, meditation or yoga, stress reduction, and time management skills. Other institutions have begun to implement pet therapy programs as a stress reduction measure, partnering with local animal shelters. Finally, institutions in Ontario promote the Good2Talk hotline for students who are in need of assistance.

INSTITUTION	EXAMPLE
All Ontario Institutions	Good2Talk Hotline https://good2talk.ca/
Simon Fraser University	Dog Therapy Program https://www.sfu.ca/students/health/events-and-workshops/dog-therapy.html
Carleton University	Koru Mindfulness Program https://carleton.ca/health/koru/

Peer Support

Peer support programs are increasing in popularity. Peer mental health support programs exist on several campuses, where student leaders are trained to provide empathetic support to their peers. In another model, mentorship programs have been implemented where incoming graduate students are partnered with older graduate students who are further along in their program to guide them through the expectations and demands of graduate school. Finally, culturally based peer support is increasingly provided at institutions (e.g., international student peer support, First Nations sharing circles).

INSTITUTION	RESOURCE
McMaster University	Elder in Residence Program https://indigenous.mcmaster.ca/indigenous-service-and-community/elder-in-residence-program
Guelph University	Peer Support Network https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/ssn
Lakehead University	Peer Mentorship Program https://www.lakeheadu.ca/programs/departments/history/undergraduate-programs/peer-mentorship

3.2.2 EARLY DETECTION

Early Alert Systems

Several post-secondary institutions have begun to adopt an early alert system, where faculty and staff who are concerned about a student may discretely and anonymously report their concerns to the Student Wellness Centre (e.g., UBC's "Early Alert" system). Additionally, some schools offer a similar service where students can submit concerns about fellow peers (e.g., Carleton University's "Care Report" system).

The Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health (CICMH) offers a free, introductory webinar on how to develop a campus "early alert" system for institutions who may be interested (<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/webinars/developing-a-campus-early-alert-system/>).

INSTITUTION	RESOURCE
University of British Columbia	"Early Alert" system (staff/faculty concern) https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert
McGill University	"Early Alert" system (staff/faculty concern) https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/staff/early-alert-system
Carleton University	"Care Report" system (peer concern) https://carleton.ca/studentaffairs/care-report/

Suicide Prevention

Many post-secondary institutions have begun to provide suicide prevention training to both staff and faculty. Among these specialized training workshops are SafeTALK and ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training).

INSTITUTION	RESOURCE
University of Saskatchewan	SafeTALK Suicide Prevention Training https://students.usask.ca/events-calendar/2019/02/SAO-safeTALK.php
University of Calgary	ASIST Suicide Prevention Training https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services/staying-healthy/learning/workshops-training/asist

Residence Staff Training

Similar to an early alert system, many institutions have incorporated training for staff in student residences (e.g., floor monitors, RAs). The purpose of this is to educate staff on the signs and symptoms of mental health deterioration so that they may detect first-year students who may be struggling.

INSTITUTION	RESOURCE
Guelph University	Mental Health Training Suite for Student Leaders/ Mentors https://www.uoguelph.ca/studentaffairs/mental-health-and-wellness-training-student-leadersmentors

3.2.3 TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Counselling and Psychiatric Services

The majority of institutions across Canada provide limited access to mental health counselling, therapy, and psychiatric services to their students. Therapy is offered in a one-on-one setting or in groups, and typically by appointment. In order to manage high demand, institutions often limit the number of sessions a single student can receive, in addition to managing long wait lists. Some schools, in an attempt to meet demand and minimize wait times, have begun to partner with online therapy programs such as TAO (Therapy Assisted Online) and Feeling Better Now (FBN). These resources, in addition to 24/7 helplines found in Section 6 of this Toolkit, can be helpful when mental health crises strike outside of regular business hours.

INSTITUTION	RESOURCE
Queen's University	Therapy Assisted Online (TAO) https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/TAO
Guelph University	Feeling Better Now (FBN) https://www.mystudentplan.ca/uofguelph/en/mywellness
University of Waterloo	Counselling Services at uWaterloo https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-wellness/counselling-services

Specialized Therapy

Outside of basic mental health counselling, many institutions offer specialized therapy. For example, faith-based counselling, trauma counselling (for victims of harassment, assault, or discrimination), and culturally specific counselling (e.g., counsellors specializing in Indigenous mental health or international student mental health). In addition to these specialized areas, the majority of institutions also offer academic counselling through Academic Success Centres, designed to support students who are struggling with their coursework (typically delivered by appointment, or through walk-ins).

INSTITUTION	RESOURCE
Western University	International Student Counselling https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/international_students.html
University of Victoria	Indigenous Counselling https://www.uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/supports/counselling/index.php

Referrals and Community Partnerships

In order to meet the growing demand for counselling services and mental health treatment on campus, several institutions have begun to form partnerships with community organizations, where clients' care can be transferred when and if it is required. Several institutions in Ontario have formed partnerships with local Canadian mental Health Association chapters to provide after hours and crisis support for at-risk students, as campus mental health services do not run 24/7. Additionally, forming community partnerships like this also ensures that graduating students who have been receiving treatment on campus do not fall through the cracks, and instead experience continuity of care upon leaving university.

The Centre for Innovation in Campus mental Health (CICMH) has developed a helpful guiding document for institutions interested in cultivating community partnerships. The document can be accessed for free online (www.campusmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Campus-Community-Partnerships-V6.pdf).

3.4 INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES, PROCESSES, AND PROCEDURES

Applying a Mental Health Lens to Campus Policies

In 2014, OCAD U and Ryerson University released a report on policy approaches to post-secondary student mental health ³³. The goals of this report were to review existing student mental health policies in Canadian post-secondary institutions, and educate the reader on the ways in which typical university policies may impact student wellness. In addition to this, the report provides a conceptual framework for understanding the types of policies that have implications for student mental health and mental wellness.

The authors differentiate between individual and universal policies. Individual policies tend to be more reactive in nature and are concentrated on individual needs. These are policies that specifically support individual students experiencing mental health concerns, such as: accessibility and accommodations, medical leave, privacy and confidentiality, policies for supporting a student in crisis. In contrast, universal policies are more proactive in nature, establishing broader institutional processes, rules, and structures that support all students in thriving academically and emotionally. Examples include: creating fair and flexible processes for grading and conflict resolution (academic policies, student code of conduct), and promoting inclusive curricula and pedagogy (academic principles).

The authors further refined existing mental health policies as taking a consolidated or mainstreamed approach to design, implementation, and evaluation. Where a consolidated approach brings together all policies and procedures pertaining to student mental health, a more mainstreamed approach applies a mental health lens to all institutional policies.

Following their review, the authors concluded that most Canadian policies focused on individualized care, rather than a universal approach, with the vast majority falling into the realm of disability and accommodations ³³. Existing policies were found to cover the following four themes: accommodations, voluntary and involuntary leave, student code of conduct, and confidentiality and privacy. However, the authors noted that increasingly, a growing number of institutions are attempting to integrate a mental health perspective into institutional policy review and development, applying an overall wellness promotion approach that supports the needs of the campus as a whole ³³.

Recent work in the area of Canadian post-secondary mental health and wellness suggests that a mainstreamed approach to policy development is recommended, particularly with the increasing development of comprehensive mental health action plans at individual institutions. Given the multitude of areas for policymaking in the post-secondary setting, it is likely that most institutions will seek to develop both individual and universal policies, depending on the topic at hand.

Some areas where policies should be developed, incorporating a mental health lens include:

- **Minimum Funding Packages for Graduate Students**

*All graduate students should receive minimum funding packages in the same amount, regardless of mental health status. Temporary leave for mental health-related reasons shall not result in the removal or reduction of funding packages. *Note: This policy may be determined at the Faculty or even Departmental level depending on where budgetary decisions lie.*

- **Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct**
Students with declared mental illnesses shall be held to the same standard as those without for issues pertaining to student academic and non-academic misconduct.
- **Employment Equity Policy**
Students with declared mental illnesses upon entry to university, or students who develop a mental illness over the course of their post-secondary career should not be penalized during application processes.
- **Absences from Work Policy**
All students should be equally entitled to protections for absences from work and/or academics (i.e., parental leave, sick leave, bereavement leave, etc.), similar to university employees. Temporary mental health leave should be made available, and should not impact students' academic standings, funding packages, or employment statuses.
- **Sexual Harassment and Discrimination**
All students should be equally entitled to protections from sexual harassment and discrimination, regardless of mental health status. All students, regardless of mental health status, will be held to the same no-tolerance policy regarding acts of sexual harassment and discrimination.
- **Occupational Health and Safety**
All students should be equally entitled to workplace health and safety protections, which should include the right to refuse work that exceeds hours contracted for, or that is not explicitly denoted on one's contract.
- **Student Accommodations**
All students should be equally entitled to receiving formal academic accommodations, where applicable. Faculty members will respect formal accommodations, and are responsible for meeting students' needs and for maintaining students' privacy and confidentiality. Students will not be penalized for having academic accommodations.
- **Alcohol and Substance Use**
Students with declared mental illnesses shall be held to the same standard as those without for issues pertaining to alcohol and substance use misconduct, with the exception of those who hold a medical prescription (i.e., cannabis use for anxiety).
- **Workplace Violence Policy**
All students should be equally entitled to protections from workplace violence, regardless of mental health status. All students, regardless of mental health status, will be held to the same no-tolerance policy regarding acts of workplace violence.

3.5 ASSESSING STUDENT WORKLOADS AND ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

3.5.1 STUDENT–SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

The student-supervisory relationship can be a key source of stress over the course of a student's graduate career, particularly if the fit between student and supervisor is unsuitable. In fact, on the 2016 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, only 50% of student respondents indicated that they would select the same faculty supervisor again were they to start their graduate career over ³⁴. In extreme cases, graduate students have reported being subjected to academic bullying in the form of a supervisor taking credit for a student's work, a student being berated for not meeting expectations, or feeling that a supervisor's behaviour was otherwise unethical ³⁵. More frequently, students report issues around lack of mentoring and poor communication.

Strengths and Weaknesses in Academic Supervision

Overall, advisors appear to be well-versed in the academic requirements for students (e.g., providing feedback and constructive criticism, providing helpful advice for qualifying examinations and dissertation development), but perform less well at tasks related to mentorship beyond academia. For example, 30% of students indicated that they disagreed with the following statement: "my advisor encouraged discussions about the current job market and various career prospects" ³⁴.

This issue of mentorship applies not only to the end of a student's graduate career, but throughout its lifespan. Graduate students require mentorship in many areas over the course of their program: support and guidance in learning to manage the graduate school workload; meeting major early milestones like comprehensive examinations and thesis proposals; and support for continual development over the course of one's graduate student career (i.e.,

preparing publications, conference presentations, etc. to build a competitive CV).

Communication Challenges

Despite effective and regular communication being one of the major expectations graduate students have of their supervisors, over one fifth of respondents on the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey indicated meeting with their advisor less than once per month to discuss ongoing research, with meeting frequencies slightly higher when the intention of the meeting was to discuss the dissertation ³⁴. This is particularly concerning for master's level students who are usually only conducting one year of research (usually following one year of coursework). In these cases, meeting with an advisor less than once per month (<10-12 occasions over the course of a year) is unlikely to constitute enough time to build a strong working relationship, as well as fit in opportunities for mentoring beyond academia. While it certainly stands to reason that there may be periods where frequent meetings are not required, regularly scheduled meetings can be helpful to support student-supervisory communication (beyond that which can be achieved in a quick e-mail), manage expectations, and monitor student progress. As a result, many institutions have incorporated regular meetings as a criterion in their student-supervisor policies, agreements, or frameworks.

Sample Student-Supervisory Policies

For institutions looking to develop a policy or framework in this area, we have included below a few examples of relevant documents from post-secondary institutions across Canada.

- **Queen's University Graduate Supervision Handbook**
[https://www.queensu.ca/sgs/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.sgswww/files/files/Students/Aug%202018%20Graduate%20Supervision%20Handbook-electronic\(1\).pdf](https://www.queensu.ca/sgs/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.sgswww/files/files/Students/Aug%202018%20Graduate%20Supervision%20Handbook-electronic(1).pdf)
- **University of British Columbia Graduate Student and Supervisor Agreement**
https://www.grad.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/forms/student_supervisor_agreement.pdf
- **UBC's Guidelines for Building an Effective Graduate Student-Supervisor Relationship**
<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/information-supervisors/building-effective-graduate-student-supervisor-relationship>
- **Memorial University's Responsibilities of Supervisors and Graduate Students**
<http://www.mun.ca/sgs/responsibilities.pdf>

3.5.2 EXTENSION POLICIES

Many post-secondary institutions have policies surrounding extensions for late coursework. Typically, among these are formal academic accommodations and extenuating circumstances policies. In this section, we would propose a third extensions policy be added to those currently in formal use in institutions: discretionary extensions.

Academic Accommodations

The majority of extension policies at Canadian post-secondary institutions pertain to formal academic accommodations. These are typically granted on a case-by-case basis to students with learning, physical, or mental disabilities, and fall into the realms of: teaching and learning (e.g., note taking), assessment and evaluation (e.g., private space to write exams), environmental (e.g., strategic seating), or auxiliary services and supports (e.g., sign language interpreters, alternate format text, assistive technology). Academic accommodations may be granted on a permanent, interim, temporary or retroactive basis with supportive documentation from a health care professional.

Extenuating Circumstances Policies

Some institutions have incorporated "extenuating circumstances" policies. These policies are though frequently these are applied only to physical health ailments or unpredictable leaves (i.e., bereavement leave due to a death in the family) and require the provision of a doctor's note from the student for a due date to be waived and extension to be granted. In keeping with the highlighting of universally applying a mental health lens to all institutional policies, as discussed in Section 3.4, we propose that extenuating circumstances policies be applied to unexpected mental health leaves, in addition to physical health leaves (note that this is already the case at some institutions). Note that transportation issues, personal or family events (vacations, weddings), and technological issues are rarely eligible as extenuating circumstances. Extensions granted for extenuating circumstances require the submission of official paperwork.

Discretionary Extensions

Here, we propose a third type of extension policy be integrated into post-secondary institutions: discretionary extensions. This type of extension would be granted to students experiencing unexpected disruptions in their ability to complete academic coursework, on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the course instructor. Unlike academic accommodations and extenuating circumstances, this type of extension would not require medical or other formal documentation to be granted.

This flexibility would not only allow course instructors to provide extensions at their own discretion (student by student and class by class), but would also serve to support graduate students experiencing an acute and unexpected state of mental distress, or an unmanageable workload. Discretionary extensions are already being unofficially provided by many course instructors in many post-secondary institutions, however, this is not currently a recognized policy.

4.1 GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

The purpose of Graduate Student Associations (as well as broader Student Unions that serve the entire student population) is to advocate for the needs of students, act as a resource, and provide supports and services that improve the overall student experience at a post-secondary institution. These organizations can be champions for graduate student mental health through a number of avenues, including: designing mental health campaigns tailored to graduate students, lobbying the Canadian government for students' mental health and wellness rights, and advocating the administration.

4.1.1 DESIGN A GRADUATE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

To design an effective graduate student mental health campaign, graduate student associations should refer to the lessons communicated in Sections 2 and 3. To build a campaign to last, consider three main factors: scope, sustainability, and scalability.

Scope

Scope refers to how narrow or broad your campaign or project is in terms of either the issues it addresses, the activities it is comprised of, or a combination of both. When deciding on the scope of your project, consider the following points

1. **Know your target population.**
What are graduate students' most in need of? What can you do to help? Design your campaign or program around this.
2. **Have a specific goal in mind.**
While there are likely several areas that could be addressed, resist the temptation to try to do everything at once. Select one "problem area" to address. Otherwise, you run the risk of trying to do too many things and stretching yourself too thin.
3. **Have a communication plan.**
Universities are big places, with varied student groups (even within graduate studies alone). Ensure that you have developed a communication plan that will reach all of your graduate students, ensuring that they are each offered a way to participate and be involved (including off-campus, online, and part-time students).

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the lifespan of your campaign or program. Whether your project will survive in the long run depends on thoughtful planning.

1. **Don't neglect the importance of program evaluation.**
When developing your program or campaign, keep future evaluation work in mind. Develop an evaluation plan that will allow you to provide evidence that your campaign is effective and valuable. Positive evaluation results will help you to secure funding to support your program.
2. **Secure renewable funding.**
Many excellent programs or campaigns are launched by students, but are then unable to continue due to lack of funding. Donations accrued through fundraising initiatives make for great start-up funds, but it is wise to seek renewable funding as soon as possible in order to ensure the future of the program. Alternatively, try to design a program or campaign that does not require financial investment to keep it going.
3. **Have a change management plan.**
Incorporate a "binder pass" or some other form of transferring the campaign/program management to a new project lead every year to avoid losing momentum.
4. **Secure administrative buy-in.**
With administrative buy-in, your program or campaign is likely to be more stable in the long-run. Consider partnering with your campus' Student Wellness Centre or Student Health Centre, which may expand your reach and help you to reach those students who may be most in need of the messaging your campaign or program is sending.

Scalability

It's a good idea to start small until you know your program is sustainable. Once you can be confident in the stability of the program, however, you may want to consider scalability. Scalability refers to the reach of your campaign or program.

1. **Expand your goals.**

Can your sustainable program or campaign be expanded? Are there other important messages (or student needs) that can be added to your existing campaign or program?

2. **Expand your audience.**

Are there other student groups that might benefit? Remember that if you do plan to expand your campaign/program, it's important to circle back to considerations around scope and sustainability.

4.1.2 LOBBYING THE GOVERNMENT

The Canadian Federation of Students regularly represents students by bringing concerns directly to the government on Parliament Hill and provincial legislatures. The CFS meets regularly with Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), as well as other government officials, civil servants, and political representatives.

Each year, the CFS hosts provincial and national "lobby weeks" where students from across the country have the opportunity to meet with MPs and MPPs with requests for how to better the lives of post-secondary students. Lobby weeks are typically organized in the early Spring in advance of the federal budget.

The CFS's 2020 lobby document, "Be Bold: Education and Climate Justice for All," was provided to MPs and Senators the week of Feb 17, 2020. This document included recommendations pertaining to federal funding and tuition fees for post-secondary education, Indigenous access to education, graduate student research funding, international students, climate justice and student housing. The document can be viewed here: www.cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CFS-Lobby-Document-2020.pdf

4.1.3 LOBBYING THE ADMINISTRATION

In addition to lobbying the government, Graduate Student Associations may also lobby their post-secondary institution's administration directly. This may look different on each campus given that every campus has unique needs and realities. Members of the CFS have previously lobbied their administrations for things such as campus wide committees and initiatives to support campus and student wellness and more diverse counselling services and supports.

The CFS provides guidance on how to take action on campus. The **Organizing Guide** is designed to give Student Unions and other student organizations a toolkit with which to run and promote student union membership, run effective campaigns on campus, and engage in activism on behalf of post-secondary students³⁶. The document provides guidance on how to best leverage campaign tactics, including educating (e.g., leafleting, class talks, presentations), agitating (e.g., petition collection, town halls, testimonials), and organizing (e.g., walk outs, rallies and protests).



This section of the toolkit contains information sheets on common stressors among graduate students^{9,13,37}. These information sheets are not designed to provide exhaustive information on each topic, but rather to give students some basic guidelines for how to manage stressors.

5.1 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Definition

Stress is a normal response to a challenging event, or a constant build-up of demanding events. Sometimes, stress can be a good motivator, leading to increased productivity, growth, and motivation (this is termed “eustress”). However, negative, long-term stress can lead to a deterioration of both mental health and physical health, so it's important to learn some stress management techniques.

Common Challenges

Feeling Overwhelmed

Sometimes it can be difficult to take a step back when we become so stressed out that we are feeling overwhelmed.

Solution: Recognize that some degree of stress in life is normal, and that learning to manage your stressors is part of the process. Take a step back and determine what your stressful triggers are. Then, make a plan to address them. If the stress you are experiencing is becoming debilitating (i.e., you are not able to cope on your own), it may be time to reach out to your family doctor or other health provider.

School is Stressful

By nature, achieving your post-secondary education is a challenging, stressful task. Between juggling courses (both those you are taking, and those you're assisting with), research, and other academic responsibilities, some degree of stress is to be expected. This is true of life beyond post-secondary as well.

Solution: As noted above, a certain degree of stress is normal in life. Time management skills and the ability to prioritize are key to managing multiple demands and reducing stress. Though tempting, stay away from negative coping mechanisms in favour of positive ones. Some examples are listed below.

Heavy Workload

Many graduate students carry heavy workloads, from regular coursework, to dissertation writing and research, to research projects on the side, to teaching responsibilities, publications, and conferences. Sometimes everything seems equally important to your graduate career.

Solution: There are certain things graduate students have to get done (i.e., coursework, dissertation research). However, if your stress is reaching an unmanageable point, it's time to have a conversation with your supervisor about your workload. After all, mentoring you and managing workload expectations is what your supervisor is there for.

Strategies

- **Relaxation.**
Particularly if the stress you are feeling is becoming overwhelming, some simple relaxation techniques can make a big difference. Some options include deep breathing (or technical breathing), progressive muscle relaxation, yoga practice, and meditation.
- **Hobbies.**
Turn to some of your favourite hobbies for a short period of time to reduce the amount of stress you're feeling (e.g., artwork, knitting, board games, or reading).
- **Energy boosters.**
Eating a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep, and engaging in physical activity all act as energy boosting, stress-busting activities.

- **Time management**

Improve your time management skills by learning to “block” your day into periods of time dedicated to specific tasks or to do’s. Not only will this keep you on a schedule and potentially improve your productivity, it will give you a sense of control over your list of to do’s.

- **Something’s got to give.**

If you’re finding your stress impossible to manage, ask yourself whether it’s possible that you simply have too much on your plate. In this case, you will need to do some prioritizing – if something’s got to give, what can you drop (i.e., an extracurricular activity, a publication that has been stalled for months)?

5.2 SELF-CARE

Definition

Self-care consists of any activity done deliberately to take care of one’s mental, emotional, and physical health. While many of us are experts at taking care of those around us, we often do so at the expense of our own mental, emotional, or physical health. Self-care is an important component of health promotion; it is vital that we put an effort into carving out time for ourselves to recharge and relax.

Research shows that individuals who engage in regular self-care have better mental and emotional health outcomes. One study conducted among Australian post-secondary students found that those with the healthiest self-care behaviours demonstrated the lowest levels of anxiety, depression, stress, sedentary behaviour and binge drinking ³⁸.

Common Challenges

Finding Time

When managing what feels like an already very full schedule, carving out time for self-care is often one of the biggest perceived barriers for post-secondary students. Time management is one of the most important, practical skills you can develop during your post-secondary career.

Solution: One simple way to start putting time aside for self-care is to start a “no [x] after [y] PM” rule. For example, no checking or responding to e-mails after 8PM. By removing small (but surprisingly time consuming) tasks like this, you free up time for self-care.

Battling Guilt

Feeling guilty about taking time for one’s hobbies or interests can be a major barrier for achievement-oriented students, who likely feel like their time might be better spent on upcoming projects and deadlines.

Solution: The fact of the matter is we will always have competing priorities, and it’s okay to take some time for yourself. In fact, many studies have shown that taking time for self-care leads to increased productivity. Make a concerted effort to block off some time for self-care at the end of your day. Start with 15 minutes, and slowly work up to one hour.

Forcing It

If you find you are forcing yourself to engage in something for “self-care” purposes – you are not practicing self-care! Hate running? Maybe going for a jog isn’t the best option for your physical activity mood-booster.

Solution: To practice self-care, engage in activities that are enjoyable for you. For some, that might be taking a yoga class, but for others, this might look more like reading a few pages from a good book or watching an episode of your favourite TV show.

Strategies

- **Relaxation.**

Read a book, watch an episode of your favourite TV show, or do a five-minute meditation.

- **Soothing activities.**

Get a massage, take a bubble bath, or take a quick nap.

- **Get enough sleep.**

It's important to let your body properly recharge. Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night.

- **Exercise.**

Endorphins are a mood-booster, and keeping your body moving is important for overall health. Take a yoga class, go for a walk, or join a group exercise class.

- **Socialize.**

Spending time with friends and family is another important mood booster. Call your mom, grab a coffee with a friend, or take a walk with a peer on your lunch.

5.3 WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Definition

Achieving a clear separation between work life and home life can be a major challenge for graduate students. Often, the nature of graduate school is such that students feel they are never “off the clock,” unlike more traditional careers where working hours are clearly laid out (i.e., 9AM - 5PM). As a result, many graduate students experience their work and home lives bleeding into each other.

While challenging, it is important to set aside clear time frames for “work” and “home.” Lack of a healthy work/life balance can lead to burnout and negative mental health consequences ³⁹.

Common Challenges

Feeling Guilty for Not Working

A common challenge to achieving that ideal work/life balance for graduate students is the ever-present feeling that they “should be working” or “should be writing”. As a result, taking any time “off” from work can result in feelings of guilt.

Solution: Put simply, graduate students must strive to change their mindset on the idea that they must always be working. Yes, there is a lot of work to be done, particularly in an ever-increasingly competitive academic environment. However, the consequences of not taking a break here and there can be dire. As recommended for finding time for self-care, one simple way to start working towards a work/life balance is to put a “no [x] after [y]” rule in place (i.e., no reading or answering e-mails after 8PM).

Pressure from Supervisor

Sometimes, graduate students feel that they must meet, and in some cases exceed, their supervisor's expectations.

Solution: A supportive supervisor should always be available to discuss your workload and progress. If you are feeling overwhelmed and finding that achieving a work/life balance is not possible given your current workload, it's time to sit down with your supervisor to see what can be pushed to next semester or handed off to someone else so that you can do your very best work on your most important tasks (i.e., your dissertation).

Comparing Myself to Others

One major challenge with graduate studies is that often, your peers seem as or more driven to succeed than you. This can lead to unhealthy comparison to others (i.e., I'm not being as productive, working hard enough, or doing enough to further my academic career).

Solution: Just as with social media, we must be cautious with comparing ourselves to others. Everyone tends to put their best outward-facing self forward at work, particularly if they are working in a competitive environment, like academia. However, that doesn't mean that they aren't struggling with their own challenges, or even feeling the exact same way as you! Research is often a slow process, so celebrate the small successes, and celebrate those of your peers'. Forming a supportive, collaborative environment in your lab or research group may go a long way to reducing negative comparisons.

Strategies

- **Boundaries.**

Set aside places in your home where work is never done. For example, never do work in your bedroom if it can be avoided. If you have a separate room in your home that can serve as an office, ensure that you only do work there. Similarly, try not to engage in “home” activities at the office.

- **Step away from the phone.**
Set aside places in your home where work is never done. For example, never do work in your bedroom if it can be avoided. If you have a separate room in your home that can serve as an office, ensure that you only do work there. Similarly, try not to engage in “home” activities at the office.
- **Set a goal outside of work.**
Setting a personal goal to reach outside of academic responsibilities (i.e., running a 10km race, finishing a knitting project, finishing a book for book club) can help you to block your time more effectively. If you have to set aside time for training, this will force you to take a step back from work during that time.

5.4 FINANCIAL LITERACY

Definition

Financial literacy refers to the ability to understand and apply financial skills to managing one's money, including budgeting and managing debt. Financial concerns are a major source of stress for post-secondary students^{40,41}. Today, the necessity of having to work in addition to attend classes has been linked to students feeling overwhelmed as well as experiencing increased stress levels. In contrast, financial confidence has been found to be a significant contributor to students' positive emotional wellbeing⁴²⁻⁴⁵.

Common Challenges

Not Knowing Who to Ask

Depending on the nature of our financial literacy needs, it can be challenging to figure out who to ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask for help – it's important to take control of your finances!

Solution: If your questions have to do with student loans, it may be prudent to talk to a customer service agent with the organization you take your loan from (i.e., OSAP in Ontario), or to a representative from your bank. If your questions relate to more long-term or complex financing goals, your best bet is to speak with your bank. If your questions are more straightforward, or short-term (i.e., learning how to budget or set aside some savings), you might want to talk to your parents, a frugal friend, or investigate whether or not your institution offers financial literacy education for students on campus.

Feeling Embarrassed

Talking about money can be stressful for some people, particularly with friends and family. As a result, some graduate students may choose to avoid talking about money completely.

Solution: It's important to remember that having a clear understanding and control over your personal finances is an important life skill. There is no rule that says you have to discuss your finances with your friends and family, but speaking to a financial advisor should not come with a layer of guilt or embarrassment – these representatives are there for exactly this purpose.

Strategies

- **Finance workshops.**
Ask your graduate student association (or equivalent) if there are financial workshops offered for graduate students at your post-secondary institution. Many institutions offer some form of financial literacy education for students for free, whether it be on tax information, basic budgeting, or student loans.
- **Career planning.**
Often for graduate students, stress associated with finances stems from concerns surrounding obtaining a job following graduation (this is often linked to stress around having to pay back hefty loans). One way to counter this stress is to speak with a career counsellor at your post-secondary institution. Feeling more confident about your job prospects post-graduation may help to alleviate some of the stress associated with finances.

5.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

Definition

While social media has helped us to become more connected to our friends and family than ever, it has also had some unexpected negative consequences on our mental health. Students have reported that comparing themselves

to others based on peers' social media accounts is a growing source of stress ⁹.

It's important to recognize that along with social media profiles comes an element of performance. Rarely do individuals post about negative goings on in their lives, which results in presenting an outward picture of perfection. In the context of graduate studies, this might mean that peers post exclusively about the papers successfully published, grants won, and conferences they've had the opportunity to attend, but not about rejected manuscripts, funding challenges, or exhausting work schedules that led to these achievements. In addition to the comparison aspect, spending time with social media can also become so all-encompassing that it begins to interfere with other activities that improve our overall health (i.e., exercise, taking time for hobbies, spending time outdoors, and more).

Common Challenges

Fear of Losing Connection

Now that we have grown so accustomed to constant connectivity, the idea of leaving our phones behind – or even limiting our use of them – can seem very challenging. In addition to this, many of us are now tethered to our devices through work responsibility.

Solution: Start small. Leave your phone behind while you go to grab a coffee, or while you go out to lunch with a co-worker or peer. Leave your phone in a different room of the house while you watch a movie with your partner or roommate. Eventually, you will grow more accustomed to this habit and begin to lose the muscle memory of always reaching for social media.

Breaking the Habit

Routinely checking your Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter multiple times a day can become a hard-to-break habit. This habitual “checking” can become an ingrained behaviour.

Solution: One simple solution you can try to limit your habitual checking in is to move your social media apps off your home screen or into a folder system. This means that routinely checking in on your social media feed will require a bit more work, and may help you to reduce your time spent staring at your phone screen. You can also try turning off social media notifications on your phone.

Strategies

- **Practice self-reflection.**
Recognize that everyone puts their best foot forward on social media, and that the information shown on someone's profile does not necessarily reflect the truth. Think about the types of stories you share on your social media, and work to change your perspective.
- **Social media “cleanse”.**
Increasing in popularity is the social media “cleanse,” which involves deactivating your social media accounts for a certain period of time, and returning to them later. You can make your cleanse more extreme (i.e., deleting your accounts) or less extreme (restricting use to a few hours a day) according to your needs.
- **Turn off push notifications.**
Of course you are tempted to check in on your social media accounts when you receive constant notifications on your device. Try turning off notifications temporarily, and see if this helps you to reduce your overall usage.
- **Unfollow problematic accounts.**
Do you “follow” one or more accounts that you find you are constantly comparing yourself to? Do yourself a favour and hit the unfollow button.

5.6 IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Definition

Imposter syndrome is increasingly becoming a source of stress and languishing mental health among graduate students in North America. Imposter syndrome refers to an inability to accept or internalize deservedness for one's accolades, and is often accompanied by overwhelming self-doubt and feeling like a fraud. Graduate students struggling with imposter syndrome often dismiss their successes as stemming from “luck,” “good timing,” or resulting from

another peer's withdrawal of their own, superior work.

Imposter syndrome can be very problematic, as it often results in individuals underestimating their abilities and therefore missing out on opportunities (i.e., not applying for a job or submitting an abstract to a prestigious conference or journal due to the assumption that one's work is 'not good enough'). Research suggests that the syndrome affects females more often than males, but all graduate students can experience it.

Common Challenges

Worry You'll be Exposed

One of the cornerstones of living with imposter syndrome is a persistent feeling that you may be "exposed" as a fraud – in the context of academia, perhaps this means that you feel as though your supervisor or peers will "found out" that you aren't cut out for graduate school after all. Often, this fear of exposure can lead to attempting to ignore or live with feelings of imposter syndrome, rather than overcoming them.

Solution: Spoiler alert – a large proportion of graduate students (and faculty, for that matter) experience imposter syndrome. Chances are, there are other peers in your research group or lab that are sharing your experience. Talking to your peers, family, or supervisor about how you are feeling are all great ways to start to overcome imposter syndrome.

Perfectionism

Research has linked the personality characteristic of perfectionism to imposter syndrome. In fact, it is often the highest achievers that experience the worst symptoms. The problem with perfectionism is the tendency to set unrealistically high expectations or goals for oneself, resulting in disappointment and/or feelings of failure when these goals are unmet. Perfectionists tend to fixate on their failures, rather than celebrating their achievements.

Solution: Work towards setting realistic goals by breaking up large projects into smaller components you can achieve. It may also be helpful to work with your supervisor to develop realistic expectations.

Strategies

- **Logical reasoning.**
Particularly for graduate students, one strategy for battling imposter syndrome is to logically consider why you are where you are. You went through a formal, impartial admission competition, and were selected out of a number of applicants to attend your program, at your school. Therefore, you deserve to be where you are. Taking a logical approach can combat feelings of imposter syndrome.
- **Rewire your thinking.**
Frequently, imposter syndrome comes from unwritten "rules" graduate students elect to follow. These can be things like "I shouldn't have to ask for help" or "I shouldn't need an extension." Rewire your thinking; if the job is turning into a much larger one than initially expected, it is perfectly acceptable to ask for help or request an extension.
- **Discuss with your supervisor.**
Supervisors are there to support you throughout your graduate school career. Forming a positive, supportive relationship with your supervisor can be key to overcoming imposter syndrome. Ask for specific feedback on your work, and determine ways you can improve even more.
- **Formal counselling.**
Seeking professional help from a therapist or counsellor can help you to work through feelings of imposter syndrome, and provide you with a toolkit of methods to combat imposter syndrome (i.e., mindfulness, CBT, etc.)

5.7 SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

Definition

As discussed in Section 3.5.1 of this Toolkit, a positive and productive relationship with one's thesis supervisor (or advisor) is a major component of a graduate student's post-secondary experience. It is your supervisor's job to effectively communicate with and support students for the duration of their graduate education. Poor "fit" between student and supervisor, or simply an unsupportive and/or uncommunicative supervisor can become a major source of

stress for graduate students.

Common Challenges

Power Differential

One of the greatest challenges for students who are experiencing ill “fit” with their supervisor is the enormous power differential that exists between supervisor and student, particularly in cases where supervisors are providing funding support for the student. Students may be concerned that raising concerns about their supervisor might negatively impact their academic career or delay their degree.

Solution: Many post-secondary institutions in Canada have developed student-supervisor policies or guidebooks to remedy this issue. If you are uncomfortable speaking to your supervisor directly, you may consider reaching out to your Graduate Program Coordinator. In extreme cases (e.g., a supervisor taking credit for student work, other bullying, etc.) you may wish to reach out to your Graduate Student Association and/or Department Head.

Lack of Communication

Poor communication (or lack of communication altogether) can be a big challenge for graduate students to address. While it is important to recognize that there will be busy periods for both supervisor and student where regularly scheduled meetings or check-ins may not be achievable (i.e., final exam and grading period), clear and effective communication between student and supervisor is one of the cornerstones of this relationship.

Solution: First, establishing up-front a regular meeting schedule with one’s supervisor can be a good strategy for alleviating future communication challenges. Secondly, students should make professional requests for meetings with a clear, delineated agenda included, outlining the exact things they would like to address. This will help both student and supervisor to adequately prepare for the meeting.

Strategies

- **Know your rights.**
It’s important for graduate students to be well-versed in their rights regarding their program. If a student-supervisor relationship is negatively affecting your progress or ability to complete your program, it is your right to speak up and advocate for yourself.
- **Clear communication.**
Establishing regular, clear communication with your supervisor is an excellent strategy for avoiding supervisory conflicts down the road. Regular communication with your supervisor, be it progress check-ins or more specific meetings about your dissertation, teaching, or research projects can all be helpful in normalizing expectations between the two of you.
- **Seek a co-supervisor.**
While this may not be a strategy that every graduate student can take, if you are feeling that your primary supervisor’s workload is too heavy to provide your project with sufficient attention, you may consider suggesting a co-supervisor. Alternatively, if you have a thesis committee already assembled, you may want to turn to your committee members for additional feedback.

CHAPTER 6 – USEFUL RESOURCES

6.1 IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

This toolkit is not intended to resolve mental health crises or cases of acute mental illness. If you - or someone you know - is in crisis, the following numbers can provide crises services. Contact numbers are organized into national and provincial categories, detailing the names of the organizations, the areas they serve, and contact numbers.

6.1.1 NATIONAL

CANADA	
Canada Suicide Prevention Service (Crisis Services Canada)	1-833-456-4566
Crisis Text Line (Kids Help Phone)	Text TALK to 686868 (ENG) Text TEXTO to 686868 (FR)
First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness	1-855-242-3310
Canadian Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line	1-866-925-4419
Trans Life Line	1-877-330-6366

6.1.2 PROVINCIAL

ALBERTA	
Distress Centre Calgary (Calgary and Surrounding Areas)	Main Crisis Line: 403-266-4357
Distress Line of Southwestern Alberta (CMHA) (Chinook Health Region and Southern Calgary)	Crisis 24 hours: 1-888-787-2880 Crisis 24 hours: (403) 327-7905
Doctor Margaret Savage Crisis Centre (Cold Lake Area)	Crisis 24 hours: 1-866-594-0533 Crisis 24 hours: (780) 594-335
Salvation Army Community and Family Centres (Greater Edmonton Area)	Mon – Fri, 9:00 – 11:30 pm: (780) 424-9223
St. Paul & District Crisis Centre (Serving all Alberta and Northeastern Saskatchewan)	Crisis 24 hours: 1-800-263-3045 Crisis 24 hours: (780) 645-5195
The Support Network Distress Line (Edmonton and Surrounding Areas)	Crisis 24 hours: 1-800-232-7288

BRITISH COLUMBIA	
British Columbia Crisis Line (Serving all areas in BC)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-800-784-2433
Canadian Mental Health Association Crisis Line (East Kootenay Region)	Crisis 24 hours: 1-888-353-2273
People in Need Crisis Line (CMHA)(Serving the Vernon area)	Crisis 24 Hour: 1-888-353-2273
Kelowna Crisis Line (Kelowna, Westbank, Winfield, Lake-country)	Crisis 24 Hour: 1-888-353-2273
Crisis Prevention, Intervention and Info Centre (Northern BC)	24/7 Crisis Line: 250-563-1214 1-888-562-1214
Vancouver Island Crisis Society	24/7 Crisis Line: 1-888-494-3888
Central Fraser Valley Telecare Crisis Line (Serving Fraser Valley)	Crisis 24 hrs: 604-852-9099
West Kootenay – Boundary Regional Crisis Line (Serving West Kootenay and Boundary Regions)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-888-353-2273
Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre (Serving Greater Vancouver Area)	Crisis 24 hrs: 604-872-3311

MANITOBA	
Crisis Stabilization Unit (Serving Winnipeg Health Region)	Crisis 24 hrs: (204) 940-3633
Klinik Community Health Centre (Serving Winnipeg Area)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-888-322-3019 Suicide Line: 1-877-435-7170
Mental Health Crisis Service (Serving Central Regional Health Authority)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-888-310-4593
Mobile Crisis Services (Serving Winnipeg Health Region)	Crisis 24 hrs: (204) 940-1781
Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU) (Serving Brandon and Assiniboine Regions)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-888-379-7699 Crisis 24 hrs: (204) 725-4411
NEW BRUNSWICK	
Chimo Helpline	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-800-667-5005
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	
Mental Health Crisis Centre	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-888-737-4668 Crisis 24 hrs: (709) 737-4668
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	
NWT Help Line	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-800-661-0844
NOVA SCOTIA	
Crises Intervention and Short-Term Crisis Mgmt (Serving Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-888-429-8167 Crisis 24 hrs: (902) 429-8167
NUNAVUT	
Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Help Line (Serving Nunavut and Nunavik)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-800-265-3333 Crisis 24 hrs: (867)-979-3333

ONTARIO	
ConnexOntario - Mental Health Help Line	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-866-531-2600
Good2Talk (Serving Post-Secondary Students in Ontario)	Crisis 24 hours: 1-866-925-5454
Kenora Rainy River District of Ontario (Serving Kenora, Dryden, Fort Frances, Rainy River)	Crisis 24 Hour: 1-866-888-8988
Hamilton Crisis Service	Crisis 24 Hour: 905-522-1477
Kitchener-Waterloo Crisis Service	Crisis 24 Hour: 519-745-1166
Kingston Crisis Services	Crisis 24 Hour: 613-544-1771
London and District Mental Health Crisis Line	Crisis 24 hrs: 519-433-2023
Niagara Region Crisis Services	Crisis 24 hrs: 905-688-3711
Ottawa and Region Crisis Services	Crisis 24 hrs: 613-722-6914 or 1-866-996-0991
Sarnia and Lambton County Crisis Services	Crisis 24 hrs: 519-336-3000 or 1-888-347-8737
Six Nations Crisis Line Crisis Services	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-866-445-2204 or 519-445-2404
Toronto Region Crisis Services	Crisis 24 hrs: 416-408-4357 Survivor Support: 416-595-1716
Windsor and Essex County Crisis Services	Crisis 24 hrs: 519-256-5000

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	
Island Helpline	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-800-218-2885

QUEBEC	
Quebec National Crisis Line(Serving Province of Quebec)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-866-277-3553
Suicide Action Montreal (Serving Montreal Area)	Crisis 24 hrs: (514) 723-4000
KRTB the Suicide Prevention Centre (Rivière-de-Loup)	Crisis 24 hrs: (418) 862-9658
Suicide Prevention Centre of Quebec (Serving Capitale-Nationale)	Crisis 24 hrs: (418) 683-4588
Suicide Action Montreal(Montreal Area)	Crisis 24 hrs: (514) 723-4000

SASKATCHEWAN	
Hudson Bay and District Crisis Centre (Serving Saskatchewan)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-866-865-7274 Crisis 24 hrs: (306) 865-3064
Mobile Crisis Service(Serving Saskatoon)	Crisis 24 hrs: (306) 933-6200
North East Crisis Intervention Centre (Serving Northeastern Saskatchewan)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-800-611-6349 Crisis 24 hrs: (306) 752-9455
Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit (Serving Prince Albert)	Crisis 24 hrs: (306) 764-1011
Regina Mobile Crisis Services (Serving Regina and Area)	Crisis 24 hrs: (306) 525-5333 Crisis after hours: (306) 569-2724
Southwest Crisis Services (Serving Southwestern Saskatchewan)	Crisis 24 hrs: (306) 778-3386

YUKON	
Distress and Support Line (Serving Yukon)	Crisis 24 hrs: 1-844-533-3030

6.2 USEFUL WEBSITES

This section includes a wealth of information for Toolkit users, comprised of organizations that produce evidence-based mental health education, contentious research, clinical resources and assessments and more.

Mental Health Commission of Canada

The MHCC leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians. The MHCC's current mandate from the Government of Canada aims to deliver on priority areas identified in the Mental Health Strategy for Canada in alignment with the delivery of its strategic plan. The MHCC's most recent project in the area of post-secondary mental health is the development of Canada's National Standard for the Psychological Health and Safety of Post-Secondary Students.

Contact: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English>

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

CAMH provides a wide range of clinical care services, including: assessment, brief interventions, inpatient programs, day hospital services, continuing care, outpatient services, and family support. In addition to these services, CAMH also develops and evaluates educational resources, and conducts science and research related to mental health and wellness.

Contact: <http://www.camh.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association

CMHA is the most extensive community mental health organization in Canada, with a presence in more than 330 communities across every province and territory in the country. CMHA provides advocacy, programs and resources that help to prevent mental illness, support recovery and resilience, and enable all Canadians to thrive.

Contact: <https://cmha.ca/>

Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health

CAMIMH is a non-profit organization comprised of health care providers as well as organizations which represent individuals with lived experience of mental illness. With a focus on advocacy, the organization provides mental health education to the public and aims to engage Canadians in conversation about mental illness.

Contact: <https://www.camimh.ca/about/>

Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

The CICMH's mission is to help Ontario's colleges and universities enhance their capacity to support and optimize students' mental health and wellbeing. CICMH stakeholders include post-secondary mental health service providers and partners, including student wellness, counselling, accessibility and more, in addition to student leaders and community partners. The CICMH hosts a conference annually to promote idea sharing and collaboration.

Contact: <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/>

6.3 IMPORTANT STUDENT-FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS

This section of the CFS Toolkit details important nation-wide student-run organizations, including mission statements and contact information. These organizations strive to support post-secondary students in their academic journeys.

Canadian Federation of Students

The largest and oldest post-secondary student organization in the country, representing over 530,000 college, undergraduate, graduate-level students, including full-time and part-time students. The Federation advocates on a national level for quality publicly-funded post-secondary education. Its members span from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador. The CFS is also the home of the National Graduate Caucus, a standalone body whose mandate is to represent and advocate for graduate students at a national level and oversee campaigns ranging from mental health matters to supporting student parents and free education for all.

Contact: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/>

Universities Canada

Universities Canada is a membership organization providing university presidents with a unified voice for higher education, research and innovation. Universities Canada, formerly the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, advances the mission of our member institutions to transform lives, strengthen communities and find solutions to the most pressing challenges facing our world.

Contact: <https://www.univcan.ca/>

Colleges and Institutes Canada

CICan is the national and international voice of Canada's publicly supported colleges, institutes of technology, CÉGEPs, polytechnics and universities with a college mandate. We work with government, industry and international partners to champion employment-focused post-secondary education that benefits learners and contributes to growing and prosperous communities.

Contact: <https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/>

National Educational Association of Disabled Students

NEADS supports full access to education and employment for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities across Canada, collaborating with post-secondary stakeholders, NGOs, employers, and disability service providers on college and university campuses. The organization focuses on three strategic areas: student debt reduction, student experience in class and on campus, and student and graduate employment.

Contact: <https://www.neads.ca/en>

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