



Working Group on Graduate Student Success



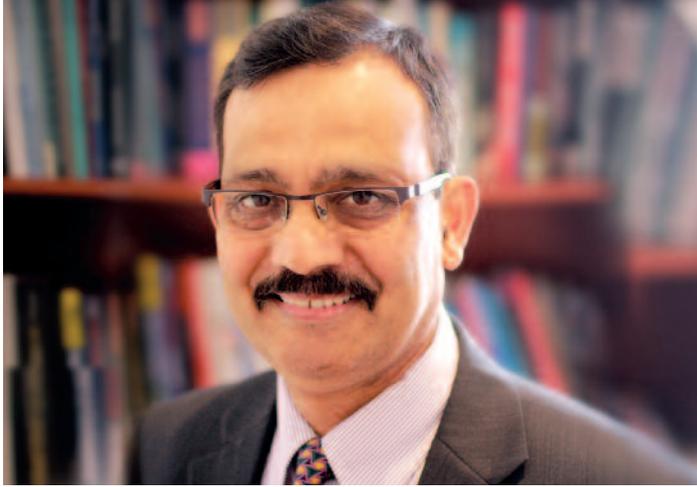
A SGS REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2019

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Message from Dr. Fahim Quadir, Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies

It is my pleasure to present the report from the Working Group on Graduate Student Success. We spent over six months listening to students, faculty, and staff and reviewing relevant documents on graduate student education across all major institutions in Canada, including those in the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities. We learned a tremendous amount and we are aware that Queen's has challenges to overcome. This exercise also made us aware that many of our challenges are similar to what other U15 universities are currently facing. Our goal is to improve the research, teaching, and learning environment for graduate students. For example, we can use the input from the Working Group to develop policies on graduate supervision that support positive student-supervisor relationships. We know we can make our funding packages more competitive and expand on efforts in professional development, wellness, and community building.

We also know that we have the ability to capitalize on what Queen's does best – particularly around the Queen's experience. Queen's has worked hard to provide an outstanding student experience for our undergraduate students. As an institution we know how to adjust and change this experience as society changes. In recent years the School of Graduate Studies has launched several programs to support the graduate student experience – from the award-winning web space around well-being, SGS Habitat, to several graduate student writing retreats and innovative professional development programming such as the PhD-Community Initiative. Now it is time to take the graduate student experience to the next level. Our mission is to promote academic excellence in graduate education and post-doctoral training across the entire university. Our long-term vision is to be recognized nationally and internationally as a university known for its academic excellence in graduate and post-postdoctoral education and training, as well as for an enriching graduate student experience.

This report describes our strengths as well as opportunities and challenges moving forward. It sets out a strategic direction on graduate education for the short, medium, and long term. There are 35 recommendations, each with a specific action and implementation plan. Many of the recommendations are already in progress; others will take more time to develop and implement. Highlights include:

- A supervisory training program for faculty to support positive working relationships between faculty and graduate students,
- A supervisory policy developed and in-line with U15 supervisory policies,
- A strategic plan to offer relevant professional development, including preparing graduate students for a multitude of careers,
- A plan to enhance pathways for support: personal well-being and community building,
- A graduate college, similar to other research-intensive universities. This graduate college would showcase the best in the Queen's graduate student experience and include housing and dining and be a hub of intellectual ideas. It would be a place for graduate students to think and grow.

I welcome your feedback and ideas for making Queen's the destination of choice for graduate students. Finally, I am grateful to the members of the working group for their work, dedication, and careful thought throughout this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fahim Quadir".

Fahim Quadir
Vice-Provost and Dean
School of Graduate Studies



Executive Summary

Brief Summary: The Working Group on Graduate Student Success was established after a Board and Senate Retreat in March 2018 focused on the state of graduate education at Queen's. The terms of reference were to review existing practices and propose enhancements to the university guidelines and practices on graduate student success. All discussions were in the spirit of the broader Queen's objective of intensifying research to which graduate students play an essential role. Topics covered included: fostering excellence in graduate student research, facilitating supervision success, updating financial support, developing professional skills, supporting wellness, and communication. There are 35 recommendations in total. A key recommendation is for Queen's to develop a supervisory policy in-line with other U15 supervisory policies. Queen's can also enhance their supervisory programs for faculty by offering them more regularly and in different formats. More strategic and coordinated planning around graduate student professional development and personal well-being are also put forward in the report. A more long-term aspirational goal is for Queen's to start serious conversations about a graduate college, similar to those of other research-intensive universities. This college would draw on Queen's unique strength in student experience and be a place for graduate students to think and grow. The college would offer housing, dining, and be a hub of intellectual growth and ideas.

What follows is a brief summary of each chapter, further followed by an implementation plan and the full list of recommendations.

Promoting Research Excellence: Graduate students are integral to the research success of Queen's. Research excellence must be made a top priority at every level so that Queen's can continue to attract and retain outstanding graduate students. Once at Queen's, there are opportunities to better support graduate students especially in the areas of funding applications, publishing, and pan-university networking opportunities.

Facilitating Supervision Success: The majority of students are happy with their supervisors, and there are many examples of exemplary and inspirational supervisory practices. However, there is room for improvement, as we heard from students who have experienced challenges in this important relationship. Our conversations with faculty also found that many new faculty were looking for guidance on effective supervision. In addition to providing more materials and workshops on the topic, the main suggestion was to introduce a graduate supervisory policy based on current SGS guidelines and similar to other U15 institutions.

Developing Professional and Academic Skills: Students are generally satisfied with the professional development programming and opportunities available at Queen's. There are opportunities, however, for programs to incorporate professional development into their curriculum. Some programs are already doing this and it is creating a sense of optimism about a multitude of career possibilities.

Updating Financial Support: Queen's overall financial support is competitive with U15 funding packages for graduate students. However, there is great variability between disciplines, programs, and domestic and international students. Funding packages should be formulated more clearly, in particular for international students. There is also room for improvement especially in the Sciences and Humanities, where Queen's ranks 5th within the U6 in terms of average doctoral funding. In addition, the International Tuition Award is losing its competitive edge as research intensive universities are looking for ways to waive international tuition fees. The complexities of the issues lead this group to recommend that a new working group immediately start work on domestic and international graduate student funding packages. Queen's should consider increasing the minimum PhD funding guarantee and restructure its International Tuition Award to maintain competitiveness and reflect the changing realities of graduate education across North America.

Supporting Wellness and Community: Wellness is a complex subject under which all the themes addressed in this report explicitly converge. The university has made great strides over the last few years in this area and the Division of Student Affairs provides a robust set of programs for graduate students on well-being. The new Mitchell Hall has positively changed the experience of students seeking services and programming. However, more clean, accessible, and physical spaces specifically

for graduate students on campus need to be created. We heard about issues concerning a growing lack of affordable housing in Kingston, budget-friendly and healthy food on campus, and physical spaces where graduate students can come together across the university to engage in intellectual debate and discussion. Queen's should draw on its strength in student experience and focus attention towards a graduate college, similar to other research-intensive universities (e.g., Massey College at the University of Toronto and Green College at the University of British Columbia).

Communicating our Vision: Effective communication is essential, especially in a decentralized institution like Queen's. The working group found evidence of overlap of programming and confusion on the part of students, staff, and faculty as well as a lack of awareness of available opportunities and support. There is need for a communications audit to ensure information to graduate students is communicated in the most effective way possible.

Conclusions: The mission of SGS is to provide leadership and strategic direction on graduate education at Queen's. Its vision is to be recognized as a globally engaged university known for excellence in graduate research, teaching, and learning. Queen's faces challenges similar to other U15 universities, especially around research support, supervision, professional development, personal well-being, and financial packages. This report has set out a strategic direction and implementation plan on graduate education for the short, medium, and long term that should address some of these challenges and push Queen's further towards excellence in graduate education.



Implementation Plan, August 2019-September 2024

Promoting Research Excellence

Recommendation	Timeline	Specific Action	Implementation Date
1. Celebrate graduate research excellence	Short-term and on-going	SGS to increase scale of recipients in graduate award ceremonies	Winter 2020
2. Provide pan-university research events	Medium-term	SGS to work with other units to introduce a pan-university graduate research conference	June 2021
3. Provide research workshops	Short- to medium-term	SGS in collaboration with other shared and academic units	On-going
4. Create Research Week	Short-term	SGS in collaboration with other units to introduce Research Week	Winter 2020
5. Create faculty workshops to support student research	Medium-term	SGS in collaboration with other shared and academic units	September 2020
6. Support faculty's research grant writing to include student training capacity	Medium-term	SGS in collaboration with other shared and academic units	September 2020
7. Encourage stream-lined research support network	Medium-term	SGS in collaboration with other shared and academic units	Winter 2021
8. Better support research in collaboration with Indigenous communities	Short-term and on-going	In collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and other relevant shared and academic units	On-going

Strengthening Student-Supervisor Relationships

Recommendation	Timeline	Specific Action	Implementation Date
9. Develop supervisory policy	Short- to medium-term	SGS to lead in drafting policy and initiate consultations with Councils	September 2021 (policy implemented)
10. Develop supplementary supervisory materials	Short- to medium-term	SGS to lead in developing materials	Passed GSEC, May 2019 and continuing
11. Provide faculty workshops on supervision	Short-term and on-going	SGS to work with the VPTL and CTL to offer workshops	June 2019 and on-going
12. Create online student-supervisor platform	Medium-term	SGS to work with VPTL and CTL to develop platform	September 2020 (platform launched)
13. Celebrate excellence in graduate supervision	Medium-term	SGS to work with academic units to encourage more awards and celebration	September 2020
14. Ensure adherence to TRC, PICRDI, OC	Short-term and on-going	SGS to work with other units to ensure implementation	On-going

Developing Professional and Academic Skills

Recommendation	Timeline	Specific Action	Implementation Date
15. Create professional development introductory course for all graduate students	Medium-term	SGS in collaboration with other academic and shared services	September 2020
16. Encourage programs to increase professional development opportunities	Medium- to long-term	SGS in collaboration with other academic and shared services	September 2021
17. Support Graduate Student Associations	Short-term and on-going	SGS in collaboration with Graduate Student Associations	September 2019
18. Create alumni engagement plan	Medium-term	SGS to work with Advancement to develop a plan for graduate alumni-inspired pan-university conference and networking	Winter 2021
19. Create professional development communication strategy	Short-term and on-going	SGS to work with other units to develop strategy	March 2020
20. Co-ordinate more strategic centralized programming	Medium-term	SGS to work with other units to build strategic programming to ensure best opportunities for cross-disciplinary opportunities	September 2021
21. Secure more resources for professional development	Short-term and on-going	SGS to advocate for additional resources to facilitate professional development	On-going with goal of December 2019 for new resources

■ Updating Financial Support

Recommendation	Timeline	Specific Action	Implementation Date
22. Establish Working Group on Graduate Funding	Short-term	SGS to lead and develop Terms of Reference for Working Group on Graduate Student Finances	August 2019
23. Increase minimum funding guarantee	Short-term	Part of the Working Group on Graduate Finances	Finances restructured for 2021/2022 recruiting year
24. Restructure the International Tuition Award	Short-term	Part of the Working Group on Graduate Finances	Finances restructured for September 2021/2022 academic year
25. Work with Advancement to increase funding	Medium- to long-term	SGS to work in collaboration with academic units and Advancement	September 2021

■ Supporting Wellness and Community

Recommendation	Timeline	Specific Action	Implementation Date
26. Create training resources for faculty and staff	Short-term and on-going	In support and collaboration with shared service units	On-going
27. Create communication strategy about well-being resources	Short-term and on-going	In support and collaboration with shared service units	On-going
28. Increase counselling capacity	Short-term and on-going	In support and collaboration with shared service units	On-going
29. Raise awareness on food insecurity	Short-term and on-going	In support and collaboration with shared service units	On-going
30. Seek support for graduate-only space	Medium-term and on-going	SGS in collaboration with others across the university	September 2021
31. Seek support for graduate student college	Long-term	SGS to work in collaboration with others across the university. SGS to initiate Graduate College Visioning Group Fall 2019	Vision Group: Fall 2019 Implementation: September 2024+

Improving Communication

Recommendation	Timeline	Specific Action	Implementation Date
32. Initiate communication audit	Short-term and on-going	In collaboration with other academic and shared units	On-going; group struck, May 2019
33. Create comprehensive communication plan	Short-term and on-going	In collaboration with shared units	On-going; group struck, May 2019
34. Redesign SGS website	Short-term and on-going	SGS to update website with clear mission, goals, values	December 2019 (phase one); September 2020 (phase two)
35. Foster communication and collaboration on campus	Short-term and on-going	SGS to work hard to continue to foster collaboration with others across campus	On-going



Full List of Recommendations

Recommendations for Promoting Research Excellence

1. Celebrate graduate student research excellence at every opportunity in a more systematic manner across the university.
2. Provide more pan-university opportunities for graduate students to network and collaborate, including research showcases, reading groups, alumni talks, and an annual university-wide interdisciplinary graduate student conference.
3. Provide more research-related workshops (both online and in person) for graduate students, especially around publishing, ethics, knowledge mobilization, and grant writing.
4. Create a “Research Week” similar to SGS’ “Career Week” to run workshops and showcase graduate student research.
5. Foster collaboration between shared services and academic units to create workshops for faculty on helping students with research dissemination.
6. Encourage faculty to allocate money for graduate student training in the form of research assistants and research fellowships in their grant applications. Further, encourage faculty to consider how graduate students can gain diverse learning experiences through their research projects.
7. Encourage academic units and shared services to collaborate to present a more stream-lined and efficient research support network for graduate students (Library, Research Services, Student Services, SGS).
8. Work collaboratively with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives to introduce support to students conducting research in collaboration with Indigenous communities.

Recommendations for Promoting Effective Graduate Supervision

9. Develop a graduate supervisory policy based on current SGS guidelines, keeping in-line with U15 policies on supervision.
10. Develop and improve supplementary materials to assist supervisors and students to clarify assumptions in an effort to foster clear communication and productive relationships. This could include student-supervisor agreement forms and an online module for students and faculty to communicate, plan, and share, while also providing alerts about relevant resources and guidance for both parties to foster healthy, productive relationships.
11. Provide workshops and awareness programs on effective graduate supervision for faculty, especially new faculty, looking for training.
12. Design a graduate supervision online platform for faculty and students to access that includes materials supporting students’ academic and professional goals, as well as new research, policies, guidelines, and timelines, and guidance to help students and faculty manage.
13. Create new opportunities to celebrate excellence in graduate supervision.
14. New policies and supplementary materials must be informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force Final Report, the Principal’s Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion report, and the Okanagan Charter.

Recommendations for Professional and Academic Development

15. Establish a course, no more than 2 days and no less than ½ day in length, in which all incoming (and current) students can enrol that focuses on professional and academic development. The course would be composed of short workshops on career preparedness, the academic and non-academic job market, job search, alumni spotlights, etc. The intention being to:
 - Alert students to the value of professional and academic development, regardless of career aspirations;
 - Alert students to the resources available;
 - Serve to increase enrolment in workshops already offered.
16. Encourage programs to incorporate professional/academic development for-credit courses into their curriculum, or, for those programs that offer them, integrate more professional and academic skills options into core research skills or methods courses. SGS may act as a facilitator to such efforts. Depending on the program/department, this could take one of the following forms: curriculum created entirely in-house; a hybrid between shared services and academic unit programming (i.e. the Centre for Teaching and Learning or Student Academic Success Services) and in-house programming; or credit entirely

based on programming already in existence (i.e. PhD-Community Initiative and Expanding Horizons workshops).
The benefits:

- Ease teaching loads on faculty depending on model chosen;
 - Hybrid programming would allow for the disciplinary specificity that many students desire as well as taking advantage of workshops already available and expertise across the university (and thus increasing student engagement).
17. Encourage those Graduate Student Associations that develop and deliver programming to continue to do so (whether conferences, works in progress, or professional and academic development workshops).
 18. Create a plan for alumni engagement to facilitate networks between current and past graduate students.
 19. Create a communication strategy to facilitate interaction/collaboration between different programs and between programs and SGS in an effort to limit scheduling conflicts, alert students to programming open to everyone, increase awareness of professional/academic development opportunities, etc.
 20. Coordinate more strategic, centralized programming (conferences, alumni/special speaker series, etc.) to allow students from diverse disciplines to come together for cross-disciplinary conversations and community building.
 21. Dedicate more resources to professional/academic development, special projects, student experience or similar positions that would facilitate programming as outlined in these recommendations (and those elsewhere in this report) as well as communicate and liaise with students regarding their needs and concerns.

Recommendations for Updating Financial Support

22. Establish a working group to gain greater insight into domestic and international graduate student funding packages across the university at all levels of study (first year to beyond years of funding eligibility).
23. Consider increasing the minimum PhD funding guarantee (now only \$18,000) to maintain competitiveness and reflect realities.
24. Restructure the International Tuition Award to maintain competitiveness and reflect the changing realities of graduate education across North America.
25. Work with Advancement to create more graduate student awards for entrance scholarships, time-to-completion bursaries, and conference participation, with emphasis on support for international students and equity-seeking groups.

Recommendations for Wellness and Community

26. Create training resources for faculty and Graduate Assistants on assessing student needs and about available resources for student wellness, with a particular focus on mental health.
27. Increase capacity for student well-being and timely access to appropriate services and supports through a targeted communication strategy, with a particular focus on resources designed specifically for graduate students as well as wellness and mental health support.
28. Increase the number of counsellors and student advisors dedicated to graduate students wherever possible, including peer advisory programs, to build greater capacity for student care.
29. Raise awareness of food insecurity on campus, reduce associated stigma, and increase support.
30. Seek increased accessible graduate-only space on campus for both pan-university events and independent work.
31. Seek support to create an accessible graduate student college that includes housing, affordable food, parental support, and space for reflection and intellectual engagement.

Recommendations for Communication

32. Initiate a communication audit to ensure information to graduate students is communicated in the best way possible.
33. Create a communication plan to ensure faculty, staff, and students are aware of key graduate student information and resources for academic, professional, and personal support.
34. Redesign the SGS website with clear mission, goals, values, organizational structure, policies, and support.
35. Work towards building capacity for greater opportunities for fostering networks between faculty, staff, and students to create a supportive, meaningful culture for graduate students at Queen's.



CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Graduate students make significant contributions to the research, discovery, teaching, and community life of the university

A positive graduate student experience is linked to a host of factors – a productive supervisory relationship, sound financial support, and a robust support network. Research increasingly shows that graduate students thrive when they are provided with a safe and supportive space in which growth can occur.¹

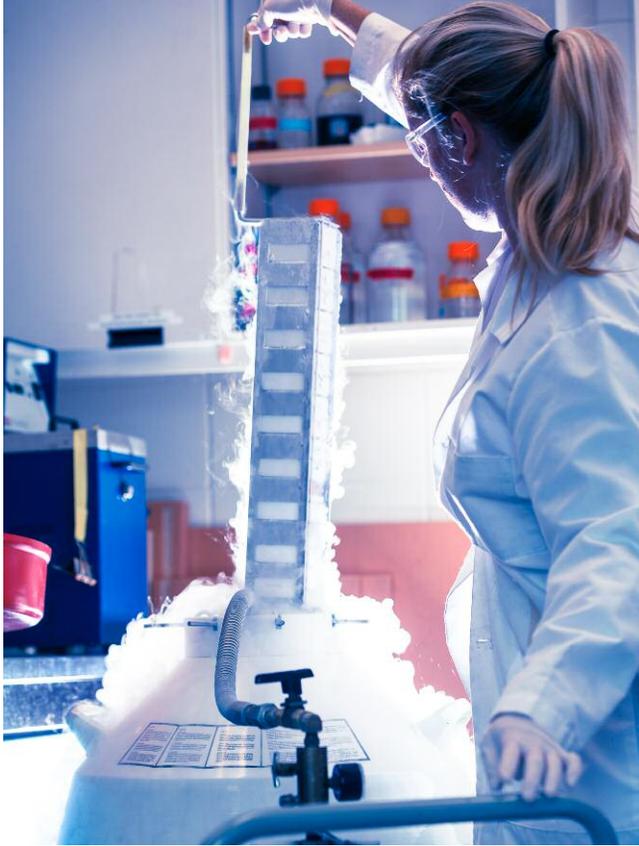
Over the last decade, graduate programs and the graduate student population has grown in terms of internationalization and diversity. This growth – and a general sense of the importance of graduate studies to the overall success of the university – has prompted a call for a review of the overall graduate student experience at Queen’s.

Context, Objectives, and Goals

The creation of a working group tasked with investigating the current graduate student environment resulted from a joint Board and Senate retreat in March, 2018. Subsequent to the retreat, Principal Daniel Woolf asked the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) to work with Provost Tom Harris to form a working group. After the appointment of the new Vice-Provost and Dean of SGS, Dr. Fahim Quadir, the Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Graduate Student Success were struck (see Appendix 1) and planning began in Fall 2018. The working group convened for its first meeting in January 2019 and completed its discussion in June 2019.

This report outlines its findings and presents a series of recommendations to better the experience and success of our graduate students.

The working group, whose membership can be found in Appendix 2, reviewed existing practices, policies, regulations, and resources around graduate studies at Queen’s. Graduate students, faculty, Graduate Coordinators and Assistants, senior administrators, and staff involved with students were consulted to obtain a varied and comprehensive understanding of the factors that affect student experience and success and to gain a deeper understanding of the existing support system for graduate students. In turn, the working group defined areas where the design and delivery of support might be strengthened and, as this report demonstrates, identified feasible changes to enhance student experience. As outlined in the Terms of Reference, the primary areas identified as requiring the most focus are: graduate student research, professional and academic development, well-being, supervision, and funding. It is hoped that the efforts of the working group will foster an increased recognition of graduate education at Queen’s.



Methodology

The working group employed mixed methods to inform its discussions and recommendations. Stakeholder consultations were the primary means by which qualitative information was gathered. These were held with domestic and international graduate students, faculty, Graduate Assistants, administrators, and staff and were facilitated by a member of the working group. Many consultation participants were self-selecting, whereas other consultations were a mix of targeted and self-selecting individuals. As with any such research, the results of these discussions provided perception and fact-based insight, both of which were valued by the working group in their ability to generate a sense of the nuanced complexities of the graduate student experience. Both help to identify issues and consider ways to improve. Perceptions, experiences, and fact-based comments are recorded in appendices 3-7. These consultations were supplemented by a comprehensive review of existing SGS reports and surveys, as well as other reports from Queen's (such as the final reports of the Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee Task Force), an investigation of best practices across Canadian universities with particular focus on the U15, and a review of policies, guidelines, and practices around graduate student education at Queen's. Quantitative data was drawn from statistics in these same surveys as well as the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies' Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey² and statistics on graduate student engagement in various services within the Division of Student Affairs and SGS.

Queen's has been granting graduate degrees for over 130 years. Our graduates are found at the highest level of business, government, academia, and civic life in Canada and abroad.

Queen's offers over 125 graduate programs to over 4,200 graduate students.

School of Graduate Studies

Our Mission

Queen's School of Graduate Studies supports the success of all graduate students and post-doctoral fellows by promoting transformative and innovative education and training. It also provides leadership and strategic direction for graduate education across the university.

Our Vision

To be a globally engaged university known for excellence in graduate and post-doctoral research, teaching, and learning that produces knowledge for the public good.

Our Values

Respect: To respect the inherent worth, diversity, and excellence of all people.

Integrity: To place the highest value on integrity in the research and teaching process at the graduate and post-doctoral levels.

Commitment: To strive to enhance the graduate and post-doctoral experience and support a robust graduate student culture at Queen's.



CHAPTER 2

Research Excellence

Graduate students are integral to advancing research excellence at Queen's

Graduate students are integral to an enriched, robust, and meaningful culture of research at Queen's University. Whether as part of a lab, at a conference, or in the archives, field, or classroom, students produce knowledge and ignite curiosity in varied and valuable ways. Through our consultations and investigations we learned about the exciting and thought-provoking research our graduate students undertake. We were inspired by their passion to learn and share. We also feel that more support for and recognition of graduate student research is needed. Engagement and action from students, faculty, programs, faculties, support and academic units, and the institution can help to enhance the already robust and enriching culture of research at Queen's.

One of the key challenges facing Queen's today is the institution's falling in national research rankings.³ Given the integral relationship between research reputation and graduate recruitment nationally and internationally, improving the research-intensity and research excellence of the university must become a top priority. An important effort in this regard has been the recent push to hire over 200 new tenure-track faculty with strong research profiles and potential. These individuals and their research programs are the future of the university. They, like all faculty, require robust support for external grant applications and grant management, knowledge mobilization,

and interdisciplinary initiatives. Queen's must encourage and assist faculty to secure external funding and to take graduate students into account in their research programs, ensuring diverse learning and research opportunities for our students, as well as increased financial support.

In addition to this broader university-wide objective to increase research excellence through faculty renewal and research support, there are also specific ways to enhance support for student research. In our consultations, students told us about the challenges they face in balancing the production and sharing of research with other responsibilities (e.g., TA/RA positions, teaching, professional and academic development, and personal circumstances) as well as challenges encountered in negotiating the particularities of their own research programs. For example, students embarking on research in collaboration with Indigenous communities may experience unique challenges (times to completion, funding, and ethics clearance being the leading barriers to creating meaningful relationships and research).⁴ While there is a need to reconcile the nature and processes of the research with the confines of the institution in such cases (see page 20 for more), for others many challenges can be addressed through increased awareness of resources already in place that are intended to help students in their research and related goals.⁵ For example, students spoke to us

about a desire to share their work via academic publication, but are anxious about the process and lack necessary guidance, whether from their supervisor, department, or Queen's generally.⁶ Queen's does offer support for graduate student publishing – the library, for example, boasts specialized staff; however, awareness of the availability of such help is low, as it is for other resources and programming offered across student service and academic units. Students also expressed a desire to share their research within the immediate graduate community and to learn about what other students study out of sheer intellectual curiosity, as well as for the possibility to create networks, community, and opportunities for collaboration.⁷ We need to better communicate to students what is already available and encourage engagement⁸ while also increasing programming in the areas that students want most.

Concrete effort to support faculty and students is integral to improving the culture of research at Queen's. Indeed, it can even address the university's key strategic drivers of the student learning experience, research prominence, financial sustainability, and internationalization as outlined in the 2014-2019 Strategic Framework.⁹ Through a shared commitment we can bolster an already rich culture of research and make Queen's a leader in the support and celebration of graduate student research.

For a full account of what he heard and what we learned, see **Appendix 3**.



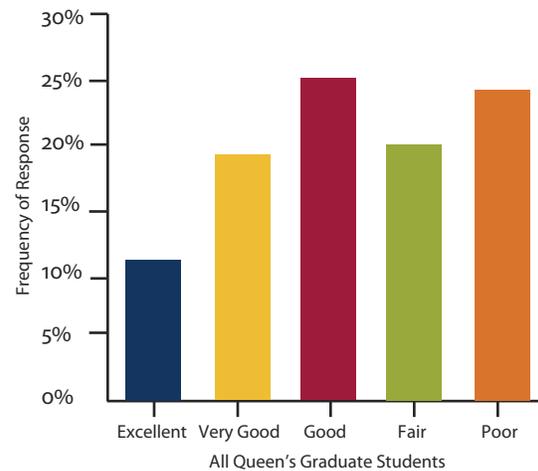


Top 5 Research-Related Suggestions from Students:

1. More information on how, when, and where to publish (Please see the chart below)
2. More financial support to present at conferences
3. More pan-university research networking and collaboration opportunities
4. More guidance on balancing diverse responsibilities and expectations with time-to-completion regulations
5. More workshops on research topics, including grants

Students were requested to:

“Rate the quality of support and training you received in publishing your work (including advice, workshops, and tools) from ‘excellent’ to ‘poor.’” The results, shown below, indicate there is room for improvement. We know that Queen’s has support available for students interested in research dissemination. By building greater awareness and introducing more opportunities for students to learn and for faculty to learn how to support their students, we hope to see more students reporting excellent training and support in the coming years.



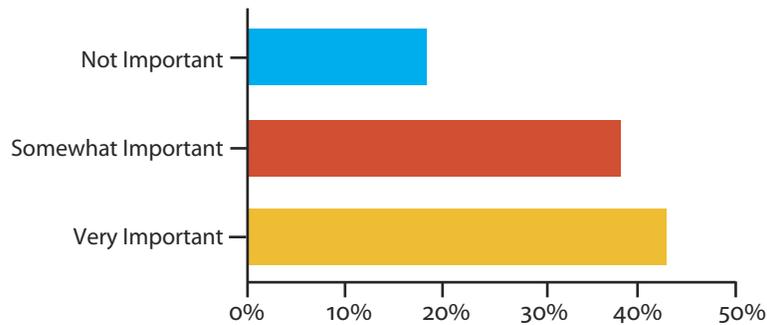
Source: Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, Prepared for Queen’s University (2019), 6.



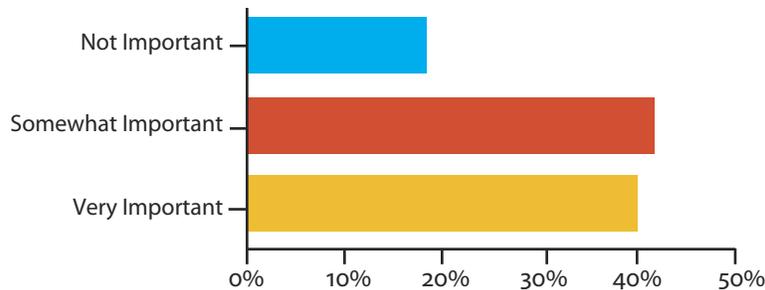
Data on the importance of collaboration and the opportunities to do so both within and outside of Queen's is reflected in the 2019 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey. Students were asked the following questions:

1. As it relates to your current program, how important is it to have the opportunity to:

a. Work/collaborate with other academics/graduate students at other research institutions in Canada?



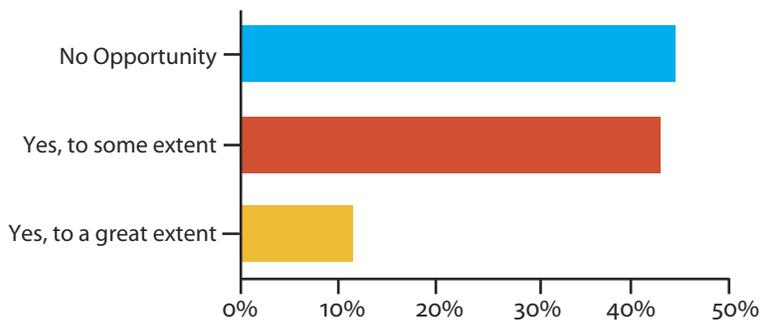
b. Work/collaborate with other academics/graduate students in other departments/disciplines at the same university?



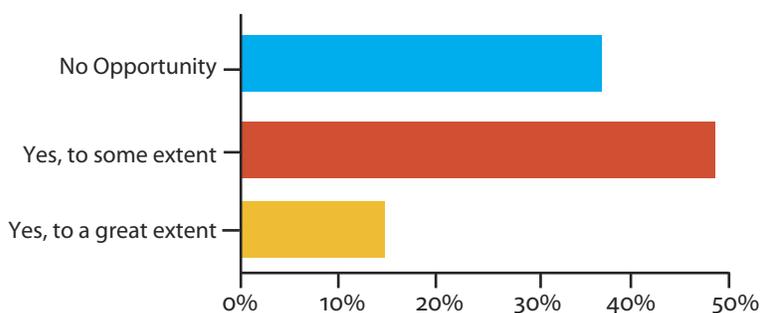
See next page for question 2

2. To date, as it relates to your current program, have opportunities been available to:

a. Work/collaborate with other academics / graduate students at other research institutions in Canada?



b. Work/collaborate with other academics / graduate students in other departments / disciplines at the same university?



Source: Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, Prepared for Queen's University (2019), 14.

These results suggest that students see collaboration as valuable and important, but that the opportunities to work and collaborate with others, whether within or outside of Queen's, are not sufficient. We must do more to foster opportunities for students to come together to share their research, experiences, and ideas so as to encourage a strong network of graduate students working to advance knowledge and support one another academically, professionally, and even personally.



Spotlight: Opportunities for Promoting Research Excellence

The School of Graduate Studies in collaboration with other academic and service units provides several avenues for graduate students to promote their research and gain new skills in the process. These mechanisms are seen as opportunities for students to practice communicating their research and ideas in a supportive, low-stakes environment. These programs can help to address students' desires for collaboration, learning, community building, and skill development.

- **3 Minute Thesis** – an opportunity for students from across the university to present their research to a wider audience and gain important communication skills. This process is meant to be first and foremost skills building and a fun way for students to meet others across the university and to share their work.
- **The Conversation** – provides news and views from the academic and research community. Publishing here allows students to share their research in a news format for wider-dissemination. Several of our doctoral students have seen major uptake of their research on social media and this has helped in their competitive funding applications.
- **Grad Chat** – an opportunity for students to share their research while developing their interview skills on CFRC radio station. This is unique to Queen's and showcases the diversity of student research.

"I think [3MT] will be a great opportunity to showcase the research I have completed and to reach out to a broad audience... I am excited for the opportunity to... reach out across disciplines and to present my findings in a manner where each audience member can engage in some way with the work that I am presenting." - PhD candidate, History

"I have been successful in sharing my research in the media and Grad Chat was key to my success. Grad Chat is an excellent opportunity for graduate students to develop their interview skills and build their confidence for media appearances. It also allows us to practice breaking down our complex research projects for a general audience. Grad Chat gave me the experience and confidence necessary to say "yes" to important interview opportunities. I am very grateful to... the School of Graduate Studies for Grad Chat." - PhD candidate, Political Studies



Spotlight: Research Collaboration with Indigenous Communities

Although completing a PhD within a 4-year period in most disciplines and research areas is the ideal, deeper thought must be given to students conducting research in collaboration with Indigenous communities.

Research with Indigenous communities is built on relationships. The time required to establish, nurture, and maintain these relationships does not always align with institutional frameworks, including time and funding constraints tied to graduate programs.

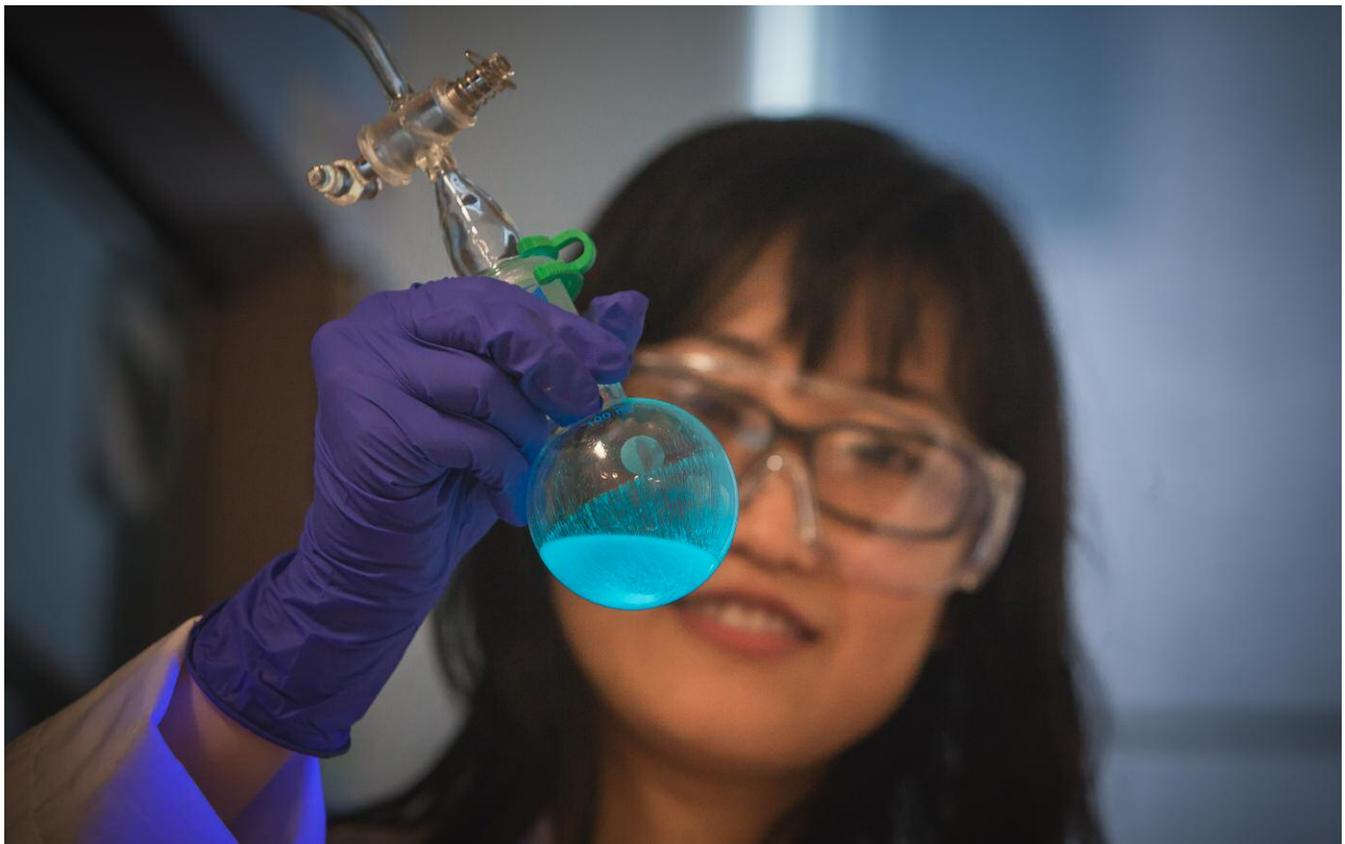
The Challenge: how can we better support students conducting research with Indigenous communities given existing institutional barriers?

See Report: School of Graduate Studies, Final Report on the Research Collaboration with Indigenous Communities Workshop (Queen's University, 2018).



Recommendations for Promoting Research Excellence

1. Celebrate graduate student research excellence at every opportunity in a more systematic manner across the university.
2. Provide more pan-university opportunities for graduate students to network and collaborate; including research showcases, reading groups, alumni talks, and an annual university-wide interdisciplinary graduate student conference.
3. Provide more research-related workshops (both online and in person) for graduate students, especially around publishing, ethics, knowledge mobilization, and grant writing.
4. Create a “Research Week” similar to SGS’ “Career Week” to run workshops and showcase graduate student research.¹⁰
5. Foster collaboration between shared services and academic units to create workshops for faculty on helping students with research dissemination.
6. Encourage faculty to allocate money for graduate student training in the form of research assistants and research fellowships in their grant applications. Further, encourage faculty to consider how graduate students can gain diverse learning experiences through their research projects.
7. Encourage academic units and shared services to collaborate to present a more stream-lined and efficient research support network for graduate students (Library, Research Services, Student Services, SGS).
8. Work collaboratively with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives to introduce support to students conducting research in collaboration with Indigenous communities.





CHAPTER 3

Student-Supervisor Relationships

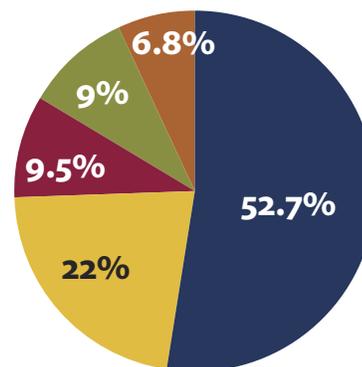
The student-supervisor relationships is a key factor in the success and experience of graduate students at Queen's

For the majority of graduate programs, the relationship between student and supervisor is central. The supervisor provides support, academic guidance, and often funding to students as they move through a degree. Supervisors may also play vital roles post-graduation in their provision of references, guidance through the job search process, and become career-long colleagues. In other words, supervisors are key to the graduate student experience and to student success. For faculty, taking on a graduate student is a commitment and an investment of time and resources that is not to be understated. Students often represent their supervisors and assist in their research programs. Many expectations and boundaries between students and supervisors require negotiation and if challenges in the relationship develop, it takes a toll on both parties (see, for example, the concerns highlighted on page 23). If challenges develop in the relationship, students are often at a loss as to how to manage and are unaware that there are mechanisms in place to offer support and guidance. Overall, we strongly believe that more awareness of available support for students is needed and that more formal structure is necessary to help both parties manage expectations. If left unchecked, a negative relationship between student and supervisor can impinge on well-being and be a barrier to success.

The majority of students at Queen's report they are satisfied with their supervisors,¹¹ some of whom have had a profound impact

Students were asked:

"If you were to start your graduate career again, would you select the same faculty supervisor?"



Definitely
 Probably
 Maybe
 Probably Not
 Definitely Not

Source: Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All, Prepared for Queen's University (2019), 5.

on the lives of their students. While we were excited to learn of the wonderful things students had to say about their supervisors, we were also saddened by those whose experiences at Queen's were negatively affected by challenges in this important relationship. These students advocated for greater oversight from the administration and accountability for faculty. Thus, there is room for improvement.¹² Excellence in graduate supervision deserves to be recognized, but we must also pay attention to those who are struggling and work harder to foster a culture of excellent supervision across the university.

For a full account of what we heard and what we learned, see **Appendix 4**.

"Several friends and I have experienced very poor supervision at Queen's. It is unclear how to remedy it and who to approach, especially for international students, since everyone requires the reference of their supervisor and it 'looks bad' to switch supervisors mid-degree. Please find a way of supervising the supervisors to ensure that they are sensitive to students' mental health and provide appropriate, timely, and sensitive feedback."

"Supervisor accountability is poor across departments that I am familiar with - SGS needs to do more to ensure that supervisors are held to basic guidelines."

"My experience with my supervisor was very tough. I thought about quitting several times. They were not motivating or supportive... I would really like to see supervisors have some sort of training in people management and motivation. There needs to be a review process for them so they can get feedback instead of believing they are doing everything perfectly while making our lives miserable."

"My time at Queen's University has been an unforgettable experience in my life. I truly appreciate all the help, support and encouragement I received from my supervisor, colleagues and other professors and staff at Queen's. Thank you all!"

■ Student-Supervisor Concerns

Student Concerns in Supervision

Faculty Concerns in Supervision

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of timely feedback from supervisors • Lack of cross-cultural awareness • Perceived disinterest or lack of engagement • Lack of knowledge of support infrastructure at Queen's • Anxiety around addressing conflict with supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to take on more students without support • Lack of awareness about resources available to support students • Lack of guidance on effective graduate supervision • Challenges with writing especially for English as Additional Language (EAL) students • Challenge with creating community
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conference opportunities

writing support **professional development**

study mentoring nurturing teaching

valued **Positive Supervision** respect

facilitating clear communication

community constructive criticism

financial support timely feedback

extra curricular opportunities

Spotlight:

Growing Body of
Research on Positive
Graduate Supervision

There is a growing body of literature in higher education research on the benefits of positive, engaged graduate supervision. Not only does high quality supervision transfer skills and knowledge to the next generation of scholars, but it is associated with higher completion rates, faster times to completion, and more successful careers for graduate students.



A. Macfadyen, et al., “Am I doing it right? Conceptualizing the practice of supervising master’s dissertation students,” in *Higher Education Research & Development* (2019), 1-16.

M. Corcelles, M. Cano, E. Liesa, G. González-Ocampo, & M. Castelló, “Positive and negative experiences related to doctoral study conditions,” in *Higher Education Research & Development* (2019), 1-18.



■ We're Already Taking Action!

In June 2019 the SGS in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning offered a workshop on graduate supervision for new faculty: "Secrets to Graduate Supervision Success."

This workshop sought to address concerns new faculty have about teaching, mentoring, and supervising graduate students, such as: how to run an effective lab, best practices in cross-cultural supervision, how and when to provide effective feedback, how to act as an effective committee member, how to support English as an additional language writers, and much more. Queen's award-winning faculty were present to address these questions and provide insight into how to be an effective supervisor.

Moving forward, SGS and the Centre for Teaching and Learning will offer this workshop on an ongoing basis. Such workshops mirror those at other universities across Canada, some of which require faculty to participate in mandatory workshops on graduate student supervision.

"The job of the supervisor is to initiate students into the joy of discovery."

- Dr. Ram Murty, 2018 AEGSS recipient at the "Secrets to Graduate Supervision Success" workshop



Spotlight:
Exemplary Supervision
at Queen's

It is important to recognize the many professors at Queen's who do and can provide mentorship to new faculty on exemplary supervision and who have had a profound effect on their students' lives.

In reviewing nominations packages for the recipients of the Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Supervision (AEGSS), the selection committee is continually impressed and humbled to read the accolades supplied by former graduate students about their supervisors. They speak of a generosity of support, inspiring mentorship, and the enrichment a supervisor brought to their professional, academic, and personal lives. While the chart below recognizes recipients of the AEGSS since 2006, the working group would be remiss if it did not acknowledge that examples of excellence in supervision extend beyond this list and take many forms.

2006-2018 AEGSS Recipients

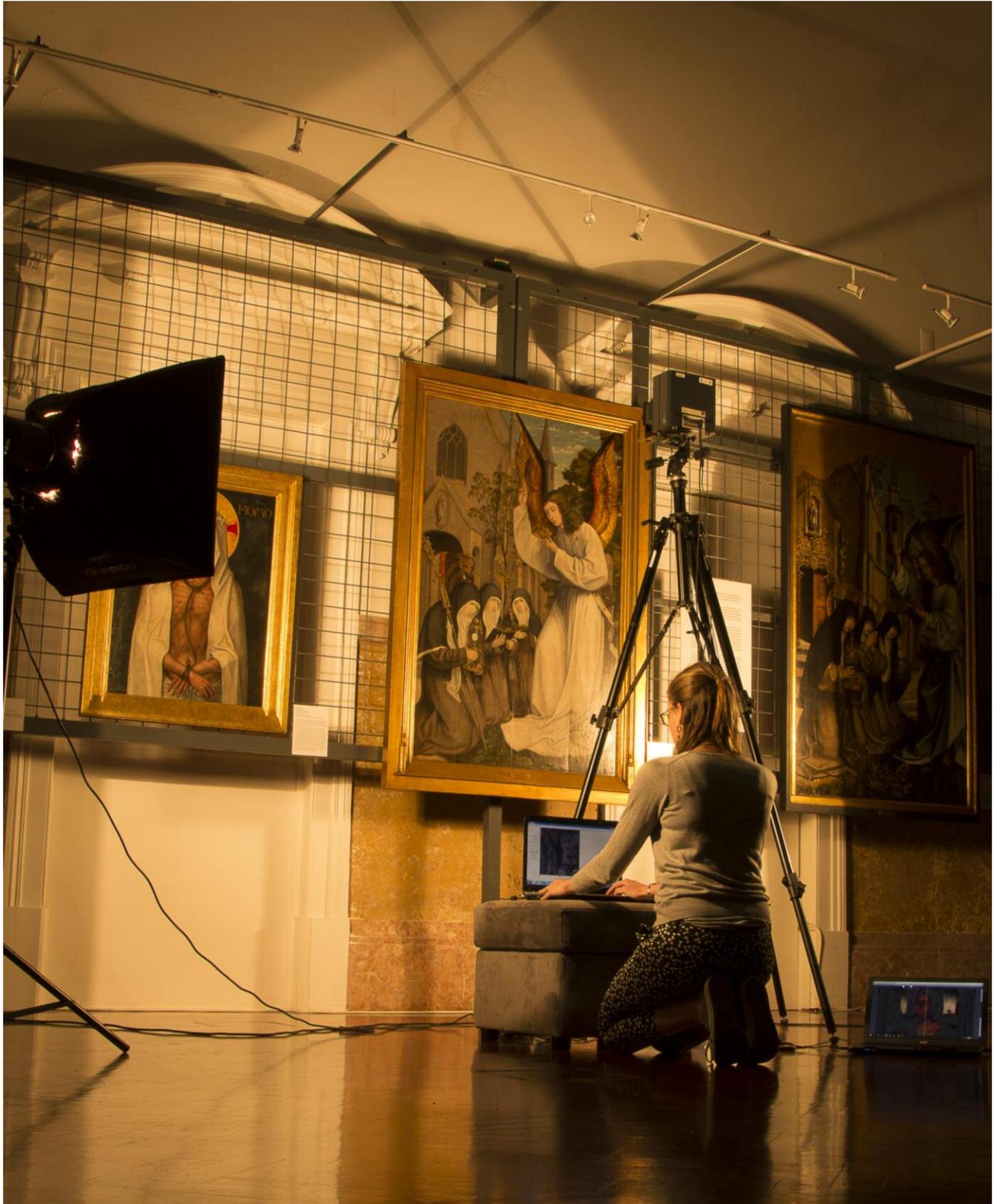
Year	Department	Recipient
2006	Department of Geography Department of Biology	Mark Rosenberg John Smol
2007	Department of History Department of Biology	Karen Dubinsky Robert Montgomerie
2008	School of Business School of Computing	Julian Barling James Cordy
2009	Department of Art History and Art Conservation Department of Chemical Engineering	Lynda Jessup Kimberley McAuley

Year	Department	Recipient
2010	Department of Geography Department of Psychology	Audrey Kobayashi Roderick Lindsay
2011	Department of Economics Department of Biology	Charles Beach Virginia Walker
2012	School of Computing Faculty of Law	Selim Akl Mark Walters
2013	Department of Kinesiology and Health Studies Department of Civil Engineering	Jean Côté Kerry Rowe
2014	Department of Biology and School of Environmental Studies Faculty of Education	Peter Hodson Nancy Hutchinson
2015	Department of History School of Computing	Allan English Hossam Hassanein
2016	Department of Chemistry Department of History	R. Stan Brown Jane Errington
2017	Department of Sociology Department of Chemistry	David Lyon Suning Wang
2018	Department of Philosophy Department of Mathematics and Statistics	Christine Sypnowich Ram Murty
2019	Smith School of Business Department of Chemistry	Yolande Chan Victor Snieckus

Recommendations for Promoting Effective Graduate Supervision:

9. Develop a graduate supervisory policy based on current SGS guidelines, keeping in-line with U15 policies on supervision.
10. Develop and improve supplementary materials to assist supervisors and students to clarify assumptions in an effort to foster clear communication and productive relationships. This could include student-supervisor agreement forms and an online module for students and faculty to communicate, plan, and share, while also providing alerts about relevant resources and guidance for both parties to foster healthy, productive relationships.
11. Provide workshops and awareness programs on effective graduate supervision for faculty, especially new faculty, looking for training.
12. Design a graduate supervision on-line platform for faculty and students to access that includes materials supporting students' academic and professional goals, as well as new research, policies, guidelines, and timelines, and guidance to help students and faculty to manage.
13. Create new opportunities to celebrate excellence in graduate supervision.
14. New policies and supplementary materials must be informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force Final Report, the Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion report, and the Okanagan Charter.







CHAPTER 4

Professional and Academic Development

Graduate studies provides valuable specialized, advanced skills and knowledge

When embarking on graduate studies many students envision a role in the academy, researching and teaching the next generation of scholars. Many more, however, pursue advanced degrees for other reasons, whether to prepare for positions in industry, government, non-profit organizations, or simply following their passion for research and learning.¹³ Further, priorities sometimes shift, and the academic path gives way to an unexpected avenue. Many students report that success in graduate school relates to the ability to secure a job or provide a competitive edge in the job market. Regardless of career aspirations, graduate studies provides valuable specialized, advanced skills and knowledge, and, increasingly, universities are providing supplementary training in professional and academic development to foster student success.¹⁴

For example, SGS has developed a robust suite of programs, referred to as Expanding Horizons, to meet student needs (participation in which can lead to a certificate in professional development), not to mention other units on campus that offer learning opportunities, such as Student Academic Success Services, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Career Services, Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre, Student Wellness Services, and Queen's University International Centre. Many service and academic units collaborate to offer joint programming (as is the case with Expanding Horizons) and these

services and units are keen to work with individual programs to create disciplinary-specific workshops. Programming is wide ranging, including topics such as personal wellness, research skills, teaching, research promotion, career preparedness, experiential learning initiatives, and equity, diversity, and inclusion. In addition, many programs offer their own programming, either organized by Graduate Student Associations or formalized credit or non-credit opportunities within a program (such as disciplinary-specific research skills and methods courses).¹⁵ Whether in the form of workshops, experiential learning, conferences, online modules, or otherwise, through professional and academic development students gain new skills and learn to apply those they already possess, providing a unique opportunity to gain experience, apply knowledge, and articulate diverse skill sets, a topic of growing importance.¹⁶

61%
of grad students

plan for employment outside of academia in business or industry, government, non-government agency, or self employment

Registration forms for SGS programming, including writing retreats and the PhD-Community Initiative, reveal that students also participate in academic and professional development for the opportunity to meet new people, to foster a broader sense of community across campus, and to mitigate program siloing and feelings of alienation that students identify as barriers to thriving.¹⁷ For example, when applying to the PhD-Community Initiative, one student wrote:

I think it's a great initiative not only in that it provides students an opportunity to create a tangible project which benefits the greater community, but also in allowing students to learn from each other by providing insights and perspectives of a number of different disciplines. I would love the opportunity to not only meet and engage with students from different departments, but to use our combined skill set to set in motion a project that can benefit others.

SGS and other service and academic units continually refine and reevaluate their offerings to meet students' changing needs and there is no shortage of programs available, yet engagement is lower than desirable as reflected in our student consultations, surveys, and registration numbers for SGS workshops. The reasons vary from lack of awareness, to scheduling conflicts and work or family commitments, a feeling that such training can wait, that other priorities are more pressing, that training is irrelevant, that a supervisor has discouraged or made participation difficult, and feeling pressure to overwork, generally.¹⁸ We heard that sometimes even targeted, discipline-specific departmental courses on methods and skills were not always useful, and at worst, not necessary, being too directed to a particular academic or career path. At the same time, there are many who feel that their programs, supervisors, and the university, generally, are not doing enough to prepare them for the realities of the academic and non-academic job markets.¹⁹ The students who do participate, however, describe and appreciate the benefits they gain. Their experiences can be transformational: of the PhD-Community Initiative, one student stated that "overall, this has been one of the most valuable experiences of my PhD and I am truly thankful to have had the opportunity to take part." Other students praised the personal guidance and support they received from Career Services. The challenges faced then, are how to improve communication about existing opportunities, ensure continued relevancy of programming, bolster student participation, and alert students to the importance of professional development, particularly at the early stages of their degrees. Importantly, we must also alert faculty to the resources available, intimate the value of such opportunities, and remind them of the diversity of careers in which their students will engage. By getting faculty, departments, and students all championing the value of professional and academic development, we can help to foster long-term success. The need for such a concerted effort is of relevance today with the emphasis placed on skills and job outcomes as metrics tied to Ontario universities.

For a full account of what he heard and what we learned, see **Appendix 5.**

"My experience at Queen's has been a positive one; however, I do feel that in the present economic climate and with enrolment increasing Queen's could make a more concerted effort to prepare graduate students for careers in a variety of professions."

"It would be great if there were career development or time spent specifically on career development - it's disappointing this is not done/promoted."

"In my Master's program, many students complained about the gap between the tools taught within courses and the skills demanded in the labour market. The program seemed to be highly geared towards students who wish to pursue PhD studies, despite a large number of students that did not share these goals. A stronger balance between theory and applied teaching would enhance the student job market profiles and provide them the skills that are actually demanded by employers."



Spotlight: PhD-Community Initiative

The School of Graduate Studies' PhD-Community Initiative is a unique interdisciplinary, experiential learning opportunity for PhD students at Queen's University aimed at encouraging students to translate skills and build or enhance others.

The initiative brings together students into inter-disciplinary teams of 3 to 5 members and pairs them with a community organization to address a particular issue of importance. Students are required to apply and translate the skills and knowledge gained in graduate training to a problem outside of their area of research. With the benefit of a fresh, interdisciplinary, analytical approach, the organization receives the help needed to move forward in a positive way.

The program is a great example of how to build community, not only among diverse students at Queen's, but between the university and Kingston. When enrolling, students cite the ability to engage with a diverse group of students, be part of the community, and gain or apply skills as the primary appeal of the program. They finish the program fulfilling these desires, but also find their expectations are exceeded, the experience standing out among the many opportunities graduate school affords. Community partners too value the program, some returning year after year to engage with our students - including the City of Kingston.

"As a graduate student, I find that sometimes it is easy to become cocooned and become less involved in the community. The PhD-Community Initiative sounds like an engaging program that will allow me to meet and interact with members from different graduate and community programs to work on a project that can have a positive impact."

"What was most valuable about the experience for me was watching a team of people who didn't know my organization actually get to know it really quickly, understand its bones, and to provide me with some new ideas and some incentives to go the next step." – Sistema Kingston, a community partner

"I came to the program looking for an opportunity to give and left the program having received so much. Thanks."

Recommendations for Professional and Academic Development

- 15.** Establish a course, no more than 2 days and no less than ½ day in length, in which all incoming (and current) students can enrol that focuses on professional and academic development. The course would be composed of short workshops on career preparedness, the academic and non-academic job market, job search, alumni spotlights, etc. The intention being to:
 - Alert students to the value of professional and academic development, regardless of career aspirations;
 - Alert students to the resources available;
 - Serve to increase enrolment in workshops already offered.
- 16.** Encourage programs to incorporate professional/academic development for-credit courses into their curriculum, or, for those programs that offer them, integrate more professional and academic skills options into core research skills or methods courses. SGS may act as a facilitator to such efforts. Depending on the program/department, this could take one of the following forms: curriculum created entirely in-house; a hybrid between shared services and academic unit programming and in-house programming (i.e. the Centre for Teaching and Learning or Student Academic Success Services); or credit entirely based on programming already in existence (i.e. PhD-Community Initiative and Expanding Horizons workshops). The benefits:
 - Ease teaching loads on faculty depending on model chosen;
 - Hybrid programming would allow for the disciplinary specificity that many students desire as well as taking advantage of workshops already available and expertise across the university (and thus increasing student engagement).
- 17.** Encourage those Graduate Student Associations that develop and deliver programming to continue to do so (whether conferences, works in progress, or professional and academic development workshops).
- 18.** Create a plan for alumni engagement to facilitate networks between current and past graduate students.
- 19.** Create a communication strategy to facilitate interaction/collaboration between different programs and between programs and SGS in an effort to limit scheduling conflicts, alert students to programming open to everyone, increase awareness of professional/academic development opportunities, etc.
- 20.** Coordinate more strategic, centralized programming (conferences, alumni/special speaker series, etc.) to allow students from diverse disciplines to come together for cross-disciplinary conversations and community building.
- 21.** Dedicate more resources to professional/academic development, special projects, student experience or similar positions that would facilitate programming as outlined in these recommendations (and those elsewhere in this report) as well as communicate and liaise with students regarding their needs and concerns.



CHAPTER 5 Financial Support

Financial support to pursue graduate education is key for graduate students

Financial concerns are among the top of the list of issues that have an effect on graduate students' experiences at Queen's. Financial struggles are felt across programs, are not limited to year of study, and can have significant implications for student well-being, both physical and mental. When faced with unexpected events that disrupt productivity, rising costs of living in Kingston, dependence on support, and continuing studies beyond the guaranteed years of funding, the sometimes precarious nature of graduate student finances can become acute.

Addressing funding is a challenge: financial support differs greatly between programs and departments, is tied to a variety of different sources and personal circumstances vary. While many of our graduate students receive good financial support, we know that many struggle. There are some opportunities for supplemental support. For example, the Ban Righ Centre and Queen's offer bursaries, the Swipe it Forward program was recently implemented,²⁰ the AMS and SGPS operate a food bank,²¹ and SGS' Expanding Horizons workshops include financial planning.

In order to adequately support our students and remain competitive by attracting and retaining outstanding candidates, Queen's understands the importance of offering funding packages that are comparable to other universities (particularly the U15) in a timely manner. Data shows that we are generally successful in providing timely offers, but further work is required in terms of competitiveness.²² While we are competitive among the U15 in general, we fall short in comparison to the U6 in some discipline areas. Most notable is that we are not competitive with the U6 in the Humanities and Sciences (ranking fifth in both) in regard to doctoral funding.²³ Further, international students report that International Tuition Awards are not used in the manner they are intended: to help cover the differential that exists between domestic and international tuition fees. Based on our findings during the course of this study and the complexities of funding generally, we believe that further investigation into financial support at the graduate level is in order so as to gain greater insight into the challenges that affect the financial situation of our students and in turn provide a better understanding of how to support graduate students.

For a full account of what we heard and what we learned, see **Appendix 6**.

Average Funding for Full-Time Graduate Students at Queen's

Overall Summary of Mean \$/Student at Queen's University - 2017-18

	Doctoral	Masters-Research	Masters-Professional
In program	\$32,624	\$22,320	\$3,556
Over program*	\$17,471	\$7,437	\$3,048

*Over-program = beyond guaranteed funding years

"Overall, I think Queen's has a good funding package for graduate students. But I also think international students have little priority when it comes to internal funding/awards. Most of the requirements for such awards do not favour international students."

Summary of Means\$/Student at Queen's for Doctoral - Domestic and International

2017-18	Number	Doctoral
Domestic	597	\$32,621
International	288	\$32,629

Source: Data supplied by Queen's University's Office of Planning and Budgeting.

"I have serious concerns regarding fees and funding e.g., although I live quite a distance from Kingston, I was not eligible for 'off-campus' status and fees. In addition, I was required to pay mandatory student fees for the ARC in spite of the fact I do not live close enough to use it. These concerns seem to indicate a lack of understanding of the situation/concerns of mature students. Additional flexibility would decrease stress and financial hardship."

"Don't tie funding to TFships. They are much appreciated, but are also real work that take time away from thesis completion. Save TFships for a final year, and let this funding help students transition from graduate work to employment."

"More funding, more accountability with funding to students, less discrepancies in the amount offered to some students vs. others."

"My PhD program went beyond the 4-year maximum imposed by most provincial and federal scholarships when considering eligibility. Though I had my own particular set of challenges in securing funding, financial concerns are problems each and every one of my peers encounter at some point or another during their graduate degree. A sort of reduced tuition fee when a student has reached their "writing" phase would be an excellent place to begin a discussion for financial relief for graduates nearing completion. It took me nearly a half-year to write and edit my dissertation working on it full-time (and I get the feeling from peers that I wrote mine swiftly!). Being even able to be designated a part-time student, or some other status, through the last phase would have helped me tremendously."

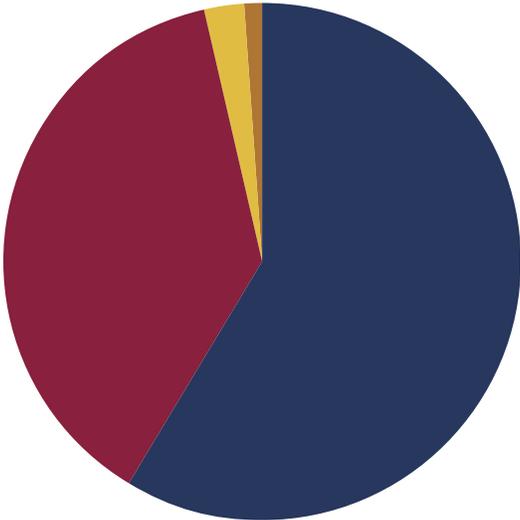


Spotlight:
International
Humanities PhD student

Most doctoral students are well supported. The average (for both domestic and international) is \$32,624.

However, some students do struggle, especially students in the Humanities where the average funding package is \$25,294. This is \$7330 below the university average. Student Awards has compiled sample budgets for students, including one for international graduate students. This sample budget suggests that an international graduate student without dependents should budget \$36,770 for the year. The total increases significantly for those with families.²⁴

For international students in the Humanities with an average funding package of \$25,294, once tuition, housing, and health insurance is paid, little is left. This does not account for those whose situations is made more complex by health concerns or dependents to support, for example.



- Tuition - International doctoral total \$14,898.80
- Housing - 1 bedroom, John Orr Tower, \$791/month (\$9,492/year)
- UHIP (health insurance, \$636)
- Food - only \$22.26/month available after tuition and housing
- School supplies including books, utilities, entertainment, transportation, etc. - no money left

The Challenge: How do we better support students who find themselves in precarious financial situations?

Time to Completion - Key to Financial Health

Completing a doctoral degree within the time frame of guaranteed years of funding (usually four years) can be a key factor not only to the financial well-being but also the mental well-being of students.

Experience and research shows that many students become demoralized if their PhD extends beyond four to five years in length.

When graduate students are beyond the years of guaranteed funding, they may receive no financial support or a package that is not sufficient to meet their basic needs. Some students may rely on short-term loans, small bursaries, and part-time jobs to get by. Balancing research/writing and other work among other responsibilities can become a challenge, which may, in turn, affect the academic and personal well-being of our students.

Number of students in program and over-program (year 5+) at Queen's, 2018

Doctoral:

In-Program	885	(18 with no funding)
Over – Program	222	(36 with no funding)
Total	1107	(54 with no funding)

Masters – Research:

In-Program	977	(24 with no funding)
Over-Program	77	(21 with no funding)
Total	1054	(45 with no funding)

Masters – Professional

In-Program	674	(108 with no funding)
Over-Program	8	(2 with no funding)
Total	682	(110 with no funding)

Source: Data supplied by Queen's University Office of Planning and Budgeting.

The Challenge: How can we better assist students to complete their studies in a timely fashion and provide support to those who find themselves taking longer than anticipated?

"In my view, the practice of charging full tuition fees for every term until final completion of the degree is counterproductive. Incentives to participate in extracurriculars (incl. teaching) are strong in the first few years of the program. Once funding runs out, they are no longer a choice, but a necessity, especially for students with families to support. Taking on teaching and other responsibilities necessarily further delays completion, which in turn entails the assessment of further tuition fees, which in turn makes it necessary for students to take on teaching and other responsibilities. Perhaps there is strong empirical evidence contradicting my views. But anecdotally, I know that this is true for a number of graduate students. Reconsideration of this policy might actually improve, rather than worsen, times to completion."

"Queen's needs to do a MUCH better job of addressing the financial burden on graduate students. Even though Ontario has no post-residency fees, Queen's could institute its own policy whereby students who are finished all coursework and comps pay a lowered tuition rate... I would hesitate to recommend Queen's to other graduate students because of the significant financial burden students are likely to face (high tuition, no tuition waiver, no post-residency fees), and the lack of resources in finding and applying for non-academic positions."

Recommendations for Financial Support

22. Establish a working group to gain greater insight into domestic and international graduate-student funding packages across the university at all levels of study (first year to beyond years of funding eligibility).
23. Consider increasing the minimum PhD funding guarantee (now only \$18,000) to maintain competitiveness and reflect realities.
24. Restructure the International Tuition Award to maintain competitiveness and reflect the changing realities of graduate education across North America.
25. Work with Advancement to create more graduate student awards for entrance scholarships, time-to-completion bursaries, and conference participation, with emphasis on support for international students and equity-seeking groups.







CHAPTER 6

Wellness and Community

The success of our students depends on a number of factors, the most important of which is their personal well-being

Wellness is a complex subject under which all of the themes addressed in this report explicitly converge. The university, and the Division of Student Affairs specifically, has done much, and continues to do much, to improve the support available to the student community, whether for their professional, academic, or personal well-being. Still, in consultations and surveys many students reported that they directly experienced, or identified, stressors that take a toll on well-being. The same concerns were reiterated by staff and faculty with whom we spoke. We heard a great wealth and breadth of information on wellness from all stakeholders and were pleased to hear praise for dedicated staff in student-facing roles (from Graduate Assistants to counsellors). We also learned about the breadth of programming available to graduate students at the university. Yet, we were concerned hearing about feelings of alienation, imposter syndrome,²⁵ program siloing, lack of community, long wait times for mental health care, and lower than desirable graduate student engagement in available programming across Queen's. Most distressing were accounts of students who were struggling to put healthy food on the table, an issue not unique to Queen's and one to which greater attention must be paid.²⁶

Given the multi-faceted nature of student well-being, this report will focus on two topics that emerged most often in

consultations across student, faculty, and staff groups: community and mental health. Regarding the latter, mental health has been and continues to be a concern at Queen's. Students, faculty, and staff are increasingly vocal about mental health and factors that can affect it for the better and for the worse. Yet, some students reported that wait times to receive mental health care were long – too long for those in immediate distress or who require timely intervention, generally, exacerbating their situations. Students found current resources to be insufficient (citing a lack of programming and counsellors). At the same time, we heard from staff in service units that graduate engagement in available resources is lower than they would like (programming and resources through Student Wellness Services and the Peer Advisory Program offered through the Society of Graduate and Professional Students to name two examples). This would suggest a lack of awareness of what programs and resources are already available to help and/or a possible reluctance to engage – both barriers to the maintenance of health. When students have accessed support – most commonly the SGS embedded counsellors – they report how beneficial it is and many advocate for the expansion of the service. We believe that one of the most effective means of supporting students is to increase awareness of access to existing resources, while at the same time encouraging the expansion of those services most in demand, particularly

counselling services. Such efforts may facilitate ongoing and early access of support and possibly positively impact wait times for counsellor appointments.²⁷

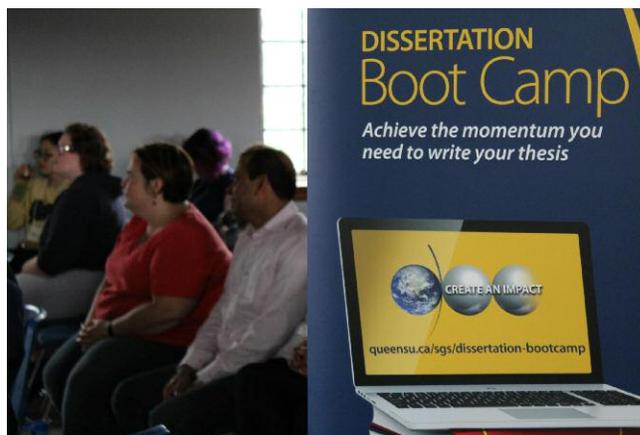
Fostering and cultivating an environment in which care and support are central must be a university-wide priority. There is already momentum in this direction: Queen's recently adopted the Okanagan Charter²⁸ and is undertaking the collaborative, campus-wide Campus Wellness Project.²⁹ Communication is key to increase awareness of these efforts to better our campus as well as supports already in place to address and maintain student well-being. Yet this can be a challenge given the decentralized and diverse nature of the graduate community, and so a comprehensive plan and concerted effort to engage students are important.

A university-wide, well-communicated effort to foster a more cohesive graduate student community may positively impact the well-being of students. Again and again we heard of the importance of and desire for a sense of a graduate community at Queen's. A community is built-in support, whether composed of fellow students, friends outside of the university, a religious community, etc., or some combination thereof. Although Queen's cannot address all of the ways one might create community, it certainly can address the graduate student population's sense of a lack of community across campus, not only with other students, but also with faculty and support staff. Through the course of this study, we learned that some graduate students feel that they are an "afterthought" to Queen's despite their vital role in its success and operations. Many expressed sentiments of resentment and dismay that cannot be ignored in light of the university's desire to foster well-being for all (for more information, see page 43).

This is not to say that there are not already examples of strong communities and networks within the graduate population. For example, a recent study suggests that a sense of community and collaboration within a program coincides with a sense of wellness.³⁰ Students describe the great value they place on the relationships they form at Queen's, whether with other students, their supervisors, or staff. Graduate Assistants and students, for example, often develop strong ties as the former are readily accessible, provide results, clearly demonstrate care, and provide direction.³¹ Students, in turn, appreciate and value the support and time that Graduate Assistants dedicate to them. The same is said of Student Advisors at Queen's University International Centre, Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre, and the Ban Righ Centre. It is the personal ties – the community chosen and fostered – that generate a sense of belonging that can have a major impact on the student experience and, in turn, on students' attitude towards Queen's as an institution. The importance of this cannot be overstated – nor undervalued.³² Examples of a sense of belonging, collaboration, relationship-building, and comradery must be systematically replicated more broadly, building a strong graduate student culture for Queen's.

A part of such efforts must be to foster networks among students, support units, and staff across campus to encourage increased awareness of whom and where to go for guidance and help, which may help to address the need for support and community.

Another key to wellness and community noted by students is dedicated physical space and opportunities to come together to meet, study, and share knowledge and experiences. Steps in the right direction have already been made, but creating physical space devoted to graduate students continues to be a challenge.³³ While many programs have designated student offices, surveys and consultations revealed that these are often isolated, poorly maintained, and not conducive to a positive work environment.³⁴ Other common areas on campus are already heavily used by undergraduate students and do not feel like welcoming spaces for graduate students. Indeed, graduate students report that they feel forgotten, that the university has long focused on undergraduate culture and experience to the neglect of the graduate community. We know the value of dedicated space – for example, although temporary, the SGS writing retreats are incredibly popular with students, who asked for more such opportunities to work and come together with other students (see page 45). Dedicated graduate-only space would provide, ideally, a place for work, leisure, and the occasional large, pan-university graduate event (such as the annual 3MT competition and research conferences). Creating space for community can address feelings of isolation that students expressed - and something we heard frequently about the nature of graduate work. Providing space and more opportunities for students to come together is a step towards alleviating some of the anxieties students discussed (alienation, imposter syndrome, lack of awareness of support, etc.) and address some of their explicit desires (to collaborate, meet others, learn about diverse research, and build community).



Students should not feel alone, that they have no support and that the challenges they experience must be borne as part of the process; but rather that others can relate and understand the unique challenges that graduate studies presents – whether that be staff, faculty, or fellow students. Space to foster community is a tangible way by which Queen’s may positively impact student well-being. Further, by fostering and building capacity for a strong graduate community through accessible, physical space and greater acknowledgment and celebration of graduate students, Queen’s has the opportunity to stimulate an already rich intellectual climate. Graduate students play a vital role at Queen’s – they are a part of undergraduate education, support faculty research, produce knowledge, and work or volunteer in student service units. Further many graduate students who reside in Kingston form strong ties to the community, living in the city year round, often bringing their families along with them and remaining, in many cases, for far longer than the more itinerant undergraduate population. The integration between the graduate population and the Kingston community is much more robust and developing a tie to the city is important to many of our students.³⁵ The value that graduate students bring to Queen’s and the broader community must be recognized and rewarded. We must create a sense of belonging and place as a means for our students to thrive academically, professionally, and personally.

For a full account of what he heard and what we learned, see **Appendix 7**.

“It is my first academic endeavor after immigrating to Canada. I am quite satisfied with the graduate education system, resources and inclusiveness of Queen’s University. Now I am a proud alumna of Queen’s!”

“There’s a lot of support available and it’s never imposed, but it’s always accessible and respectful. The Counselling Services for grad students is excellent, as are the Expanding Horizons seminars, and the Habitat Resources. Also, the weekly newsletters are really helpful - they remind me that there’s a community of students and faculty here that have our best interests at heart. And that makes something as difficult as graduate school a little bit more enjoyable.”

“After having been a part of a graduate student advisory committee on student engagement, I do think Queen’s has an excellent graduate student support system. However, departments and/or faculties should do a better job of communicating these support systems to their students so they can be utilized.”

“The SGS embedded counsellor is an incredible resource...this resource should be expanded in my opinion with counsellors of varying experience.”

“A BIG thanks to all the staff, faculty and students at Queen’s who made my graduate experience a positive and memorable one! Even though there were ups and downs, I appreciated everyone’s humanity, compassion, and assistance along the way!”

Despite positive efforts, there is still room to improve.

Many students have expressed frustration over their experiences on campus. For example: the lack of a sense of graduate community; that work spaces (offices, labs, shared spaces such as the library) are not always conducive to productivity, comfort, or their needs; that they feel like afterthoughts to the university, which they see as predominately focused on the undergraduate experience. These sentiments were voiced by both graduate students new to Queen's as well as those who completed their undergraduate degrees here. We must do more to address these frustrations, creating a more inclusive and healthy campus and working towards becoming an institution recognized not only for academic excellence, but also a strong, holistic graduate student experience.

"The university obviously panders almost exclusively to undergrads - as grad students, we often felt very left out. Our offices were shabby, and it seems like a lot of people are just accepted so that they can work as TA's for undergrad classes... the classes we TA'd often became overwhelming. It just seems so clear that Queen's really only cares about the undergrad program and the med school program."

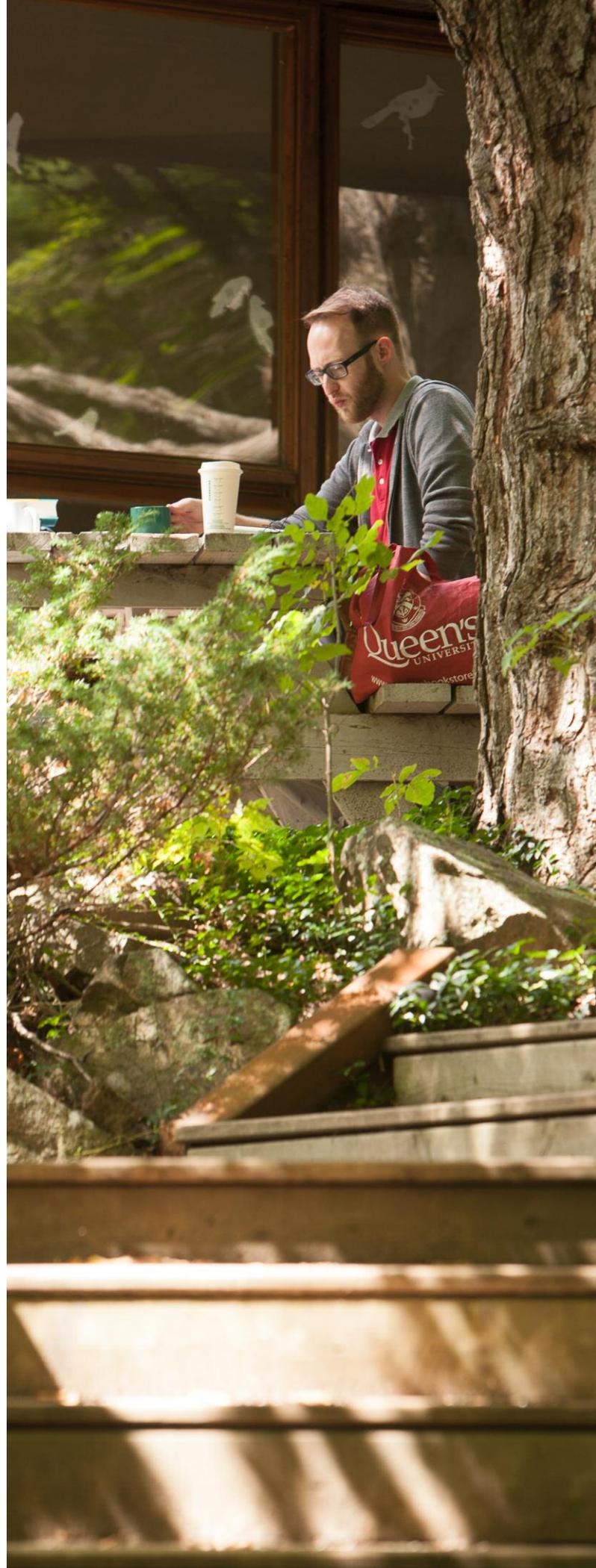
"Queen's has internalized its reputation as an undergraduate teaching institution. Often grad students do not feel represented in what goes on here and are instead treated like numbers."

"I don't feel like Queens particularly values graduate students."

"The graduate student community, specifically the [redacted] department was lackluster. Many students were not interested in social activities and created a lonely environment during my studies. More efforts should be made to create a social environment for graduate students. Overall my experience was very good, but not quite what I was expecting."

"I was an undergraduate student here and the way graduate students are treated versus undergraduate is day and night difference --- as a graduate student our needs, especially in the summer are thoroughly neglected. This is especially true of services such as food services. The changes made to time to completion and reduced cleaning and garbage were also atrocious changes. As an alumnus, I can say that I'm thoroughly disappointed about how graduate students are treated by this university on a whole."

"Office space is vital for a graduate student to complete their studies and build connections with other students and professors rather than having to study in a library next to undergrads who are not as focused on their studies."





Spotlight: Food Affordability and Graduate Students

One of Canada's leading food insecurity³⁶ experts, Dr. Elaine Power, Professor in Health Studies at Queen's, has found evidence of graduate students at Queen's not having access to a sufficient quantity of affordable or nutritious food.

Dr. Power's study, which will be presented in a forthcoming article (see below), found that some students at the undergraduate and graduate level at Queen's experienced or have experienced food insecurity. This is an issue faced at universities across North America and awareness is growing. Some important findings from our consultations echoed Dr. Power's study, specifically the concern about access to affordable, healthy food. We know that there are programs in place to help, such as the AMS/SGPS Food Bank and the Swipe it Forward Program to which staff actively refer students, yet we were also made aware of the perceived stigma around food insecurity, which makes access to these resources a challenge.

International students are particularly at risk (see page 36 for the financial challenges facing some international students). As we work to diversify the student population and implement equity, diversity, and inclusion values across the university, we need to pay attention to these realities. Dr. Power's research has led others at the university to set up a working group on the issue. By gaining insight, we hope to discover how to best support our students, raise awareness, and reduce stigma.

Elaine Power, Julia Dietrich, Zoe Walter, and Susan Belyea, "I look so normal and put together... people wouldn't even believe it': The invisibility of student food insecurity at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada," Working paper (Queen's University, July 2019).



Spotlight:

SGS Lake Shift Writing Retreat

The School of Graduate Studies offers a series of in-demand writing retreats each year. One of the most popular is The Lake Shift, which brings together graduate students from universities across Ontario at Queen's University Biological Station on Opinicon Lake.

At the retreat, students are provided with structured time to write, in addition to workshops and tips for effective writing, work-life balance, and wellness and opportunities to meet other graduate students – all in a beautiful location. The objective is to enable students to make substantial progress on their dissertations, build a community, and foster the ability to maintain writing momentum all while providing opportunities for relaxation through swimming, hiking, canoeing, and campfire conversations.

This retreat has resulted in friendships and research collaborations that cross disciplinary and university boundaries. At the 2019 Lake Shift, students were asked: “Did you find it useful and motivating to work alongside fellow graduate students?” All students replied in the affirmative. This program clearly demonstrates how valuable dedicated space and community are for graduate students. Queen’s must do more to replicate what such writing retreats provide.

“The Lake Shift Retreat was simply a shift – in perspective, in environment and in mentorship. As a graduate student, attending sessions and workshops to develop skills and competencies is a desired goal. What the Lake Shift does is help you fulfill that goal holistically. The shift in perspective happens because you are in a positive and calming environment with new friends and new faces, but now you are also learning how to deal with old problems. As a mother, as a wife, as a daughter, as a sister and a friend, I am over-committed. But at the Lake Shift, I am a student first and foremost. Producing work alongside other graduate students is a gratifying experience. Learning how to change my mindset, my words, and my attitudes is a gift. I am blessed to experience a wonderful and productive week while respecting leisure time. At the Lake Shift, you learn you can do both. Thank you for a gift of a lifetime!”

– PhD candidate, York University

“I went to Lake Shift thinking that all I would do would be to write in that head down, jaw clenched, fingers cramped kind of writing. Instead, I relaxed. The writing retreat gave me the much needed time to also take stock of where I am with my research, brought stunningly new insights, and saw me laughing out loud (something I thought was not possible at this stage of my degree!) Thank you Queen’s University for this gift of a week, Brock University for sponsoring my week, and to the organisers, workshop facilitators, and other students who made the week what it was: joyful, reflective, interesting, collaborative and productive.”

– PhD candidate, Brock University

“One of the best experiences of my entire PhD.”

– PhD candidate, Queen’s University

“Thank you so much for providing this opportunity! I truly learned a lot and and felt satisfied about my own progress, which is a feeling I haven’t had in a long time. This workshop restored by confidence and let me know I CAN do it. I can’t say enough to express how much I appreciate this. Thank you.”

– PhD candidate, University of Waterloo

Recommendations for Wellness and Community

26. Create training resources for faculty and Graduate Assistants on assessing student needs and about available resources for student wellness, with a particular focus on mental health.
27. Increase capacity for student well-being and timely access to appropriate services and supports through a targeted communication strategy, with a particular focus on resources designed specifically for graduate students as well as wellness and mental health support.
28. Increase the number of counsellors and student advisors dedicated to graduate students wherever possible, including peer advisory programs, to build greater capacity for student care.
29. Raise awareness of food insecurity on campus, reduce associated stigma, and increase support.
30. Seek increased accessible graduate-only space on campus for both pan-university events and independent work.
31. Seek support to create an accessible graduate student college that includes housing, affordable food, parental support, and space for reflection and intellectual engagement.





CHAPTER 7

Communicating our Vision

Effective Communication is essential, especially in a de-centralized institution like Queen's

Queen's is a decentralized institution and has become more decentralized over the last several years, which can make communication and collaboration across the university a challenge. This fragmented system can have a direct impact on graduate student culture. Again and again we heard of a desire among students for more support and resources across all of the categories considered in this study, which are themselves all intimately interconnected. Yet we also heard from students that they are unaware of the diversity and types of programming, resources, and support already available to them, or, if they are aware, find engaging a challenge owing to other pressures and demands on their time. Faculty and Graduate Assistants too indicated a lack of awareness of available resources, but relayed to us a desire to understand what is available so as to recommend and support engagement for the professional, academic, and personal success of their students.

The School of Graduate Studies is a pan-university school with a mission to support graduate students across the entire university. As such, we believe it is part of our responsibility to lead the way. Yet, a multi-scaled approach to communication that involves cooperation from departments, Faculties, and shared services is needed. We hope that this report is a step forward and that it will inspire others to work towards building increased recognition for graduate students and better the support available for their academic, professional, and personal success.

Recommendations for Communication

32. Initiate a communication audit to ensure information to graduate students is communicated in the best way possible.
33. Create a communication plan to ensure faculty, staff, and students are aware of key graduate student information and resources for academic, professional, and personal support.
34. Redesign the SGS website with clear mission, goals, values, organizational structure, policies, and support.
35. Work towards building capacity for greater opportunities for fostering networks between faculty, staff, and students to create a supportive, meaningful culture for graduate students at Queen's.



CHAPTER 8 Moving Forward

It is the vision of the School of Graduate Studies to be a globally engaged university known for excellence in graduate and post-doctoral research, teaching, and learning that produces knowledge for the public good.

Queen's recognizes the importance of staying competitive, attracting the best and brightest graduate students, and providing them with an enriching, healthy, and supportive environment where students can grow and develop as scholars and citizens. Queen's is in an exciting time of faculty renewal and the stage is set for further enhancing our research and teaching excellence.

Our investigations have demonstrated our strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the graduate student experience at Queen's as identified by students, faculty, and staff. We have made 35 recommendations with a clear implementation plan. We must now move forward to not only address and improve

our programming, supports, policies, and guidelines, but also to acknowledge and celebrate that which sets us apart from other institutions.

Queen's does attract excellent students thanks to our strong research profile and many fantastic graduate programs. However, there is always room to improve. One way we have identified to best respond to student needs and foster a culture of support and care for graduate students is through building capacity for a strong graduate culture. Central to such efforts moving forward must be through the creation of dedicated physical space, where students can learn, share, collaborate, and support one another.



A New Vision: Graduate College

Many top-ranked research-intensive universities have a graduate college that includes space for study, housing, dining, social space, and vibrant, intellectual exchange.

It's time for Queen's to do the same!

Buildings are more than just physical spaces – they facilitate programming, build community and can enhance the intellectual culture of the university.

Queen's needs a dedicated academic and social space for graduate students similar to other top-ranked universities. Other institutions have silent study rooms, group study rooms, teaching rooms, skills training rooms, and places to relax and socialize.

Queen's also needs a graduate building that encourages networking, creative expression and innovative thinking. The world's problems are big and graduate students are at the cutting edge of collectively searching for solutions. Solutions require collaboration and interdisciplinary thinking and the right building can facilitate the meeting of diverse minds and the cross-pollination of ideas.

Graduate student offices do exist at Queen's; however, these offices are mostly siloed by discipline and many students comment on the poor state of the spaces – as cramped, dark, or neglected. Queen's needs to be aspirational when it comes to graduate student space on campus. It also needs to cater to different needs of students including those who are international, full and part-time as well as students with families and diverse abilities. A graduate college that is beautiful, accessible and welcoming, and most of all a vibrant centre of intellectual exchange, will push Queen's further towards excellence in the graduate student experience.

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Working Group on Graduate Student Success

Based on the discussion at the Board/Senate retreat in March 2018, and the subsequent memo of the Principal, the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) has worked with Provost Tom Harris to establish a working group that aims to explore how to improve the graduate student experience at Queen’s University.

Mandate and Outcomes

The Working Group on Graduate Student Success will review existing practices and propose enhancements to the university guidelines and practices on graduate student success. It will consult with graduate students, the Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS), faculty, graduate program coordinators and assistants, senior administrators, and others involved with graduate education at Queen’s. Bearing in mind the diverse nature of the programs within SGS and the student body – and in concert with the recent PICRDI and TRC Task Force Reports – the working group will consider changes to relevant policies, protocols, and practices that will enhance the graduate student academic experience, such as the following:

- i) Fostering excellence in graduate student research;
- ii) Expanding professional skills and experiential learning opportunities to best prepare students for success after graduation;
- iii) Improving time to completion;
- iv) Supporting students’ well-being;
- v) Engaging students, faculty and the Deans in understanding and addressing emerging challenges in graduate supervision;
- vi) Enhancing communication methods to faculty and graduate students for effective graduate supervision.

The working group will develop a deeper understanding of the existing support system for graduate students and identify areas where the design and delivery of graduate student support could be strengthened. It will consider how graduate students can be given more prominence at Queen’s and explore graduate student support, including:

- The current funding model and its effectiveness in supporting graduate students’ own research activities;

- The supports available to promote graduate student well-being, including mental health awareness and counselling.

Methodology and Tasks

The working group will:

- Review existing policies, guidelines and practices;
- Consult graduate students regarding their experiences, opinions and recommendations;
- Consult with stakeholders, including graduate program coordinators, graduate program assistants, faculty, and other relevant members of graduate education. Separate consultations will be organized for each stakeholder groups;
- Review best practices in graduate education nationally and internationally;
- Recommend revised and enhanced guidelines;
- Develop recommendations for best practices that can be customized both at the institutional and program levels;
- Recommendations and action items will be classified as short (less than 1 year), medium (2-4 years), and long-term (5-10 years).

Membership

The working group will be chaired by Vice-Provost and Dean of SGS, Fahim Quadir. Its membership is tentatively approved by the Provost in consultation with SGS. In confirming its membership, Provost Harris has taken into account the diversity of graduate students, programs and disciplines at Queen’s. The membership will be the following:

- Two SGPS representatives selected by SGPS
- Two students (one must be an international doctoral candidate)
- One Associate Dean from SGS
- One Associate Dean from a Faculty
- One AVP from the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research)
- Two Graduate Program Coordinators
- One Graduate Program Assistant
- One Senate representative

Appendix 2 – Working Group Membership

Omar Bachour PhD candidate, Department of Philosophy

David Bakhurst John and Ella G. Charlton Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy

Jane Davies Graduate Assistant, Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering

Betsy Donald Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies; Professor, Department of Geography and Planning

Sandra den Otter Associate Vice-Principal (Research); Professor, Department of History

Leo Erlikhman VP Graduate, Society of Graduate and Professional Students; MA candidate, Department of Sociology

Mark Green Professor, Civil Engineering; Vice Dean (Graduate Studies and Recruitment)

Shikha Gupta PhD candidate, School of Rehabilitation Therapy

Nancy Martin Associate Professor, Biomedical and Molecular Sciences

Heather Merla PhD, Special Project Coordinator and Programming Intern, School of Graduate Studies

Tyler Morrison President, Society of Graduate and Professional Students; JD candidate

Parvin Mousavi Senate Representative; Professor, School of Computing

Fahim Quadir Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Appendix 3 – Research Excellence

What we Heard, What we Learned

Strengths

- When funds are available to support research endeavors (conferences, publishing, travel), such as the Dean’s Travel Grant, they are appreciated and help to incentivize and make feasible such efforts.
- There are many resources available at Queen’s to meet research needs (publishing, dissemination and impact of research, communication profiles, research data management plans, etc.), whether in the form of targeted workshops or support staff (such as subject and scholarly publishing librarians). These resources are often under-used, owing to a lack of awareness among students. The library, for example, has many supports available. Students who do seek assistance from specialist librarians praise their support and the services they provide.

Challenges

- Students struggle with publishing:
 - Expectations and pressure are daunting and not always clearly articulated or understood by students.
 - Students find it difficult to balance work (dissertation research and writing, TA responsibilities, etc.) and publishing while also under pressure to complete in a timely manner.
 - Students lack knowledge about where to publish and about the process, generally. For example:
 - How to deal with publication rejection/requests for revision;
 - Costs associated with publishing (image rights, etc.).

- Many students struggle to participate in professional academic conferences, largely owing to associated financial costs.
 - The amount of funding support students receive to participate in conferences varies greatly between programs and is often not enough. For example:
 - Some programs were reported to not even allocate enough to cover registration costs;
 - One Graduate Assistant mentioned that they personally approach faculty on behalf of students to request financial support in an effort to make conference participation feasible.
 - Conferences are important places to not only share research, but also to network with fellow academics and, for some, industry (potential employers). Thus, lack of participation is a potential barrier in academic/professional advancement.
- Some students reported that certain departments prevent or discourage participation in conferences.
- Students noted that they would benefit from visiting a lab or faculty outside of Queen's, but associated financial costs make this difficult, if not impossible for some.

Opportunities

- Students want more opportunities to come together to share research in an interdisciplinary format in an effort to build a community and foster collaboration.
- Students want more opportunities for collaboration.
- Students want to learn about the diversity of research across the university, not simply that which is similar to their own.
- Faculty were curious about internship programs, such as Mitacs, and how to better leverage such opportunities, particularly as a means to advance their students' research and professional development goals.
- Students believe that having a passion for their field of study is important for their success.
- Students feel that they have obtained valuable experiences (work, for example), that should count for more in terms of the metrics used by Queen's and funding agencies.

Appendix 4 – Supervision

What we Heard, What we Learned

Strengths

- Students feel productive and engaged when they have a good relationship with their supervisor (e.g. clear expectations, good communication, constructive feedback, mutual respect, support, comfort in working out ideas without fear of judgment, etc.).
- Students recognize that faculty are pulled in many directions and that demands on their time are significant and their responsibilities varied (for example, supervision involves leadership and managerial skills, for which many faculty are not trained).
- Staff and student service units feel that it is a part of their responsibility to help to address a variety of factors that impact student life, many of which they identify as stemming directly from challenging supervisory relationships.

Challenges

- A negative relationship with a supervisor can affect the mental and physical health of students; it can also be a barrier to success and to timely degree completion.
 - Factors that contribute to negative supervisory relationships as expressed by students include: harassment and/or discrimination, language barriers, perceived disinterest and favouritism, lack of accountability from supervisor (whether availability, response to correspondence or submitted work, and general lack of interest), poorly communicated feedback, lack of guidance.
- Many students do not know that they have access to support and recourse if they are experiencing challenges in their relationship with their supervisor.
 - Some fear reprisal or significant damage to their relationship moving forward should they address any difficulties (whether talking to a supervisor directly or seeking guidance within or outside of their program).

- There is a persistent fear that if a student admits that they do not wish to pursue academia they will be in a compromised position within their program and/or with their supervisor(s).
- Support staff and student service units notice the discrepancies and inconsistencies in graduate student supervision across faculties and departments and see how this affects the student experience. Their experience shows that navigating the supervisory relationship can be more challenging for international students owing to cultural differences in expectations.
- The demands placed on students, particularly in lab-based programs, prevents some from engaging in, or feeling like they are able to devote time to, other forms of learning and community building, such as professional and academic development (whether workshops, conferences, or experiential learning within or outside of Queen's).³⁷
- Many students feel like their voices are unheard by faculty, generally. Some students report sitting on faculty and committee meetings in which student concerns are raised and brushed aside.
- Some Indigenous faculty expressed feelings of pressure over workloads as their limited numbers within the university means that Indigenous students or students studying topics in which Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledge are implicated seek their support as supervisors or committee members, among other demands.
- In distance education-based courses and programs, faculty find it challenging to effectively supervise and address the needs of their students, especially as enrolment numbers increase.
- Some faculty report feeling pressure to take on more and more students, but are concerned about being able to meet their needs.
- Faculty training in supervision, mental health, management, and equity, diversity and inclusion would be of benefit.

Opportunities

- The U15 group of universities is proactive in their provision of formalized policies and procedures around the graduate student-supervisor relationship. These have been created to hold both students and faculty to account in an effort to address the well-being of all parties.
- There is a desire among some faculty for increased training and guidance as to how to be an effective supervisor, especially from early-career faculty, through workshops and mentorship programs (which already exist in some programs).
 - Other training that was cited (by both students and faculty) as potentially valuable for faculty included: how to identify and offer guidance to students in distress; equity; diversity, and inclusion; intercultural awareness; and management.
- Many faculty are unaware of the resources and opportunities available to support their students' academic, professional, or personal well-being (for example, Health Promotion, Expanding Horizons workshops, or library resources).
- Faculty ask: should there be more incentives for graduate supervisors? Suggestions include: a reduction in course loads (there is precedent in the Faculty of Education) or making it a more significant part of the merit system.

Appendix 5 – Professional and Academic Development

What we Heard, What we Learned

Strengths

- Students who participate in professional and academic development opportunities, whether within or outside of their programs, cite the value of engagement. They note value in the structure it provides and the opportunity to meet new students and build community, along with the opportunity to learn new skills and how to apply those already possessed.
- Students appreciate access to training that being a TA provides.
- Students like the personal, targeted approach that Career Services offers.
- There are a number of opportunities for professional and academic development across campus and online through SGS, Four Directions, Queen's University International Centre, Career Services, Centre for Teaching and Learning and other units.
 - These units continually revise and reevaluate their programming and services based on student needs. For example, SGS recently subscribed to Aurora, which offers online modules, allowing opportunities for growth for both Kingston-based and off-campus students.
 - Individual units often collaborate in the provision of student support programming and staff. For example, there is a dedicated Intercultural Academic Support Coordinator who splits time between Student Academic Success Services and Queen's University International Centre; Intercultural Awareness workshops are available through Queen's University International Centre and Four Directions.
- Students cite confidence, competence, and networking as keys to success.
- Students benefit from writing retreats, such as SGS's Dissertation on the Lake, the Ban Righ Centre's Writing Studio, and Four Direction's SAGE retreat, which brings together students, faculty, staff, and, in the case of SAGE, an elder to offer support and guidance to Indigenous students. More such opportunities are desired by students.

Challenges

- Students feel that:
 - The university, departments, and programs are not doing enough to prepare them for the job market (academic or otherwise);
 - Faculty lack the ability to provide support or guidance for career paths outside of the academy.
- Staff in student service units that offer professional and academic support report that student interest in their resources often comes later in their degrees, when the realities of job search and career preparation set in; pursuing opportunities and training should be ongoing throughout a degree.
 - Students acknowledge that participating in programming gets swept aside under the pressures of work directly related with a degree; they do not see it as a priority, as relevant, or are simply unaware of available support.
- Some programs have introduced professional and academic development into their programs with the unexpected result of increased demand on faculty time.

Opportunity

- More professional and academic development is needed that targets international students (language and writing assistance, writing coaching, etc.).
- There is a desire for more diverse opportunities/programming (writing supports, speaker series, participating in programming in other departments).
 - One area identified as lacking support was West Campus, which would benefit from having writing support available some days of the week.
- The ability to articulate and transfer skills is important given employer expectations; this is important as employers value a range of skills, but consistently cite the importance of soft skills.
- There is a need for greater communication/collaboration between departments (likely facilitated by SGS) and between SGS and graduate students directly. Students and Graduate Assistants report that:

- Scheduling conflicts are frustrating to departments and students (Graduate Assistants and students are often unaware of opportunities across different departments, whether workshops, talks, etc. and that scheduling conflicts make attendance difficult).
- Faculty, particularly Graduate Coordinators, expressed a desire for guidance and support about how to talk to students about pursuing employment outside of academia.
- A mechanism to track the trajectory of graduate students after graduation would be useful for recruitment as well as alumni engagement for events and networking.

Appendix 6 – Financial Support

What we Heard, What we Learned

Strengths

- Applicant surveys administered by SGS indicate that Queen's financial offers are relatively competitive and that they were received by students in a timely manner, allowing sufficient time to make informed decisions about offers of admission from other universities.
- Queen's offers financial packages that are comparable to other U15 universities, particularly in Business and Management, Education, Engineering, and the Social Sciences.

Challenges

- Queen's falls behind in the financial packages it offers in comparison to the U6 in many disciplines, most notably within the Humanities and Sciences.
- Funding in the Humanities is well below the U6 average.
- Many students cannot reconcile the demands of their programs (their own work, TA/RAs, teaching fellowships, internships, publishing etc.) in the context of eligible funding years and time-to-completion expectations.
 - This is a significant barrier to the maintenance of the health and well-being of students.

- While students in a variety of situations experience financial stress, there are certainly identifiable demographic trends. Those in the greatest distress are outside of their guaranteed funding years, are international students, and/or have dependents to support.
- Students expressed frustration over paying full tuition for all years of study (particularly after year two when course requirements, field exams, dissertation proposals, and other requirements have been fulfilled) as well as during the summer. Outside of these times, students cite their lessened use of and access to resources (limited library hours, limited dining options, no classes and so less faculty engagement, for example) as warranting reduced or waived tuition fees.
- While many students receive funding beyond the guaranteed years, there are many others who receive inconsequential to no funding.
 - As a result, many seek employment (either teaching or other kinds of work) that distract from their studies and lead to further delays and prolonged financial insecurity.
 - The need to supplement income also takes time away from other activities that support a life-work balance.
- International students indicated that International Tuition Awards are not always used as intended (i.e. to offset their higher tuition rates), making their funding packages comparable to domestic students even though their fees are much higher.
- Students feel that there is a lack of transparency in funding decisions, particularly at the program level (i.e. why one person receives a TA position and another does not when all else seems equal).
- Funding for auxiliary activities, such as participation in conferences, varies dramatically between programs and is frequently far from sufficient to mitigate the costs incurred through participation.
 - For many, conferences are key places to showcase work and network and are thus valuable in the future success of students.
- Some students are taking on debt in order to complete their studies.
- Some students experience food insecurity, which maintains a stigma despite rising awareness of its existence within student populations broadly.³⁸

- Bursary programs across campus are limited in the number of students they can serve. Even though awareness of their existence is low, funds are quickly depleted.
- Financial pressures are a barrier to success.
- More financial support for research efforts (publications, conferences, travel) would be of benefit.
- Funding packages are confusing, an issue administrators and students identify as particularly problematic for international students.
- How are faculty and student services expected to support increasing numbers of students while maintaining the same resources and support (i.e. staffing, time, money)?
- The minimum guaranteed level of funding for PhD students has not been raised since 2007.
- Offering more International Tuition Awards or a stronger financial package to international students would help to make Queen's more competitive and bolster the institution's efforts towards internationalization.
- Leveraging internships and similar opportunities through programs such as Mitacs would help to alleviate financial burdens for some.
- There is a disconnect between when students receive their financial packages and when they are told of their TA responsibilities.
 - It would benefit both TAs and faculty if their relationship could begin sooner.

Opportunities

- There is no central database on funding packages from which information and trends on funding can be stored and tracked.
- Many students are unaware of sources of funding that they may apply for (for example, Queen's General Bursary).
- Graduate students who are also staff (TAs, RAs, TFs, etc.) would like to access the 5\$ Friday lunches.

Appendix 7 – Wellness and Community

What we Heard, What we Learned

Strengths

- Graduate Assistants play a major role in student experience, being central, accessible points of contact for administrative support or otherwise, including well-being. Graduate Assistants take a keen, invested, holistic interest in their students. Graduate students recognize, value, and appreciate Graduate Assistants.
- Writing retreats, such as those offered by SGS, Four Directions, and Ban Righ are highly valued by students, and are often transformational in their experience of graduate school.
 - They help to create community, offer support, and help to build awareness around the need to take breaks and maintain balance.
 - Research collaborations and community have been built through these programs.
- In programs where there is a strong sense of collaboration and community, there is a stronger sense of wellness reported.³⁹
- Students feel engaged when they receive clear communication from staff about important resources and workshops.
- Students report that supportive staff are highly valuable. They stress the importance and value of one-on-one conversations.

Challenges

- Many students reported that support for mental health care is insufficient.
 - Students note long wait times, even for acute concerns⁴⁰ and a lack of specialized care for LGBTQ2S+.⁴¹
 - Student Wellness Services has seen an increase in the number of cases of students seeking assistance while caring for their mental health.
- Both formal resources and informal opportunities are important to students as a means to build community and engage in non-academic activities.
 - Informal opportunities seem to be lacking (i.e. clubs), which seem to be more prevalent at the undergraduate level.

- Students report that:
 - They lack awareness about resources available to support them, many misunderstand that student service units are not solely for undergraduate students;⁴²
 - Although some are aware of resources, they often feel like they cannot take advantage of opportunities owing to stress and other pressures related to their research, supervisory relationships, and other academic responsibilities;
 - They recognize that when their stress is most acute that this is exactly the time in which they should be accessing resources and engaging with their community;
 - They recognize that engaging in activities on an ongoing basis (e.g. workshops and programs such as the PhD-Community Initiative) is a good way to maintain balance, but often choose not to engage because of research and supervisory pressures;
 - They experience feelings of alienation and isolation owing to the sometimes solitary nature of graduate work; accounts of such feelings were reported across the Humanities, Social Sciences, Applied Sciences, Health Sciences, and Engineering;
 - Many have to negotiate imposter syndrome;⁴³
 - Time to completion regulations are creating increased pressure and stress.
 - Even with the best intentions and planning, finishing within the expected timeframe often does not happen, and the result can be financial and emotional stress.
- A significant concern among students is access to affordable food.
 - Food insecurity exists within the graduate student population at Queen's.
 - There are programs that exist to help, such as the AMS/SGPS Food Bank and the Swipe it Forward program, to which support staff actively refer students.⁴⁴
 - There is a perceived stigma around food insecurity that makes students avoid the topic and less likely to access available resources.⁴⁵
 - Students want more options for healthy, affordable food on campus. This desire is particularly acute during the summer when many options on campus are closed.

- The transition to Queen's and Kingston can be difficult for some international students; housing and health care are particularly difficult to navigate.
- The academic consideration process is confusing for students, which can exacerbate the difficulties already experienced.

Opportunities

- Students are asking for more support for maintaining a healthy work-life balance and managing factors that might affect their mental health.
- There are a number of resources that can help students manage stress and other factors that affect mental health, such as workshops offered through Health Promotion or guidance at the Office of Faith and Spiritual Life. All too often, students seek help when they have reached a more acute level of need. There is a desire among staff in student-facing roles to encourage students to seek support services earlier in an effort to address stressors on an ongoing basis before they become crises.
- Faculty are interested in access to training to help recognize when students are in distress and offer support accordingly.
- Graduate Assistants expressed the desire for increased capacity to offer effective and efficient assistance and guidance to students:
 - They serve a large number of students – how many students should one grad assistant be responsible for?
 - Even one struggling student is a significant demand on time (they want to help, but desire a mechanism and knowledge by which it may be done effectively and efficiently);
 - Stress on graduate assistants can increase when they are expected to cover another staff member's responsibilities as cross-training is no longer a priority;
 - Graduate Assistants would like more information on resources so they know how to best direct students in need quickly.

- Both students and staff in student-support positions repeatedly mentioned the importance of personal relationships and face-to-face communication, whether between students, between staff and students, or between faculty and students as a means to build a graduate community and effectively address needs.
- Students report that:
 - A part of success means an ability to balance their academic success and personal well-being; balancing between what they are learning in their program and other activities (networking, physical activity, etc.) are important factors in a positive student experience;
 - A factor in success for some international students is engaging in Canadian and Kingston culture and thriving within it;
 - Diet, exercise, access to emotional support are important to students;
 - Having a space to work on campus is important for productivity and fosters the maintenance of regular hours.
- It is important to lay the ground for what is consistent, accessible, and reliable support for students (e.g. resources in student support services) in an effort to build capacity for students to access assistance needed for their academic, professional, and personal well-being.

End Notes

- 1 A. Macfadyen, C. English, M. Kelleher, M. Coates, C. Cameron, and V. Gibson, "Am I doing it right? Conceptualising the practice of supervising master's dissertation students," in *Higher Education Research and Development* (2019), 1-16.
- 2 The working group is grateful to the Office of Planning and Budgeting for providing data on the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey from 2015 to 2019 at both the national and Queen's-only levels.
- 3 An external review on research at Queen's conducted in August 2016 highlighted a decline based on a study of external research funding. The report identifies "a pattern that appears to reflect an overall trend. Specifically, Queen's has seen an absolute and-or relative decline in overall external research funding during the past decade... The result of these patterns has been a decline in the standard overall measure of research intensity, from a high of 4 to a low of 11 out of 15 Canadian universities. In overall external research grants, Queen's is now 12th amongst the U15 universities. The average decline in research revenues amongst the U15 group was 5%, while at Queen's it was 10%. At Queen's, research revenue as a percentage of the total revenue has declined from a high of 24.3% in 2009/10 to 16.3% in 2013/14." Report for the Senate and Board, External Research Review – August 2016 (presented to Board and Senate November 2016), 4, available: <https://www.queensu.ca/principal/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.opvcwww/files/files/External-Review-of-Research-Summary-Report-for-Senate-and-Board-November-2016.pdf> (accessed: July 18, 2019).
- 4 School of Graduate Studies, "Final Report on the Research Collaboration with Indigenous Communities Workshop," (Queen's University, 2018).
- 5 For example, academic development workshops and specialized library staff are available to provide diverse support for students. For more on academic development, see Chapter 5 in this report.
- 6 This was revealed in consultations and is supported by the 2019 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey results. Students were asked to rate the quality of support and training they received in publishing their work (including advice, workshops, and tools) from "excellent" to "poor." For all Queen's students, the results were: Excellent – 11.2%, Very good – 19.1%, Good – 25.3%, Fair – 20.1%, Poor – 24.3%. Queen's was close to the national averages for this question, which were as follows: Excellent – 12.7%, Very good – 20.8%, Good – 27.1%, Fair – 20.2%, Poor – 19.3%. "Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, Prepared for Queen's University" (2019), 6 and Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, National Report (2019), 6.
- 7 The desire for networking, collaboration, and community building came up again and again in our consultations with students. These sentiments were echoed in the 2019 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey where students were asked about the importance of collaboration and the availability of opportunities for collaboration. Students were asked the following series of questions:
 1. As it relates to your current program, how important is it to have the opportunity to:
 - a. Work/collaborate with other academics/graduate students at other research institutions in Canada?
Results: Not important – 18.4%; Somewhat important – 38.5%; Very important – 43.1%
 - b. Work/collaborate with other academics/graduate students in other departments/disciplines at the same university?
Results: Not important – 18.8%; Somewhat important – 41.6%; Very important – 39.6%
 2. To date, as it relates to your current program, have opportunities been available to:
 - a. Work/collaborate with other academics / graduate students at other research institutions in Canada?
Results: No opportunity – 45.6%; Yes, to some extent – 43.1%; Yes, to a great extent – 11.2%
 - b. Work/collaborate with other academics / graduate students in other departments / disciplines at the same university?
Results: No opportunity – 36.9%; Yes, to some extent – 48.5%; Yes, to a great extent – 14.6%

For more, see pages 17-18 of this report.

"Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, Prepared for Queen's University" (2019), 14.

- 8 See Chapter 5 of this report for a consideration of the barriers to engaging in professional and academic development as voiced by students.
- 9 Office of the Principal, "Strategic Framework 2014-2019" (Queen's University, 2014). These strategic drivers are intended to work together to meet Queen's vision as a "Canadian research-intensive university with a transformative student learning experience."

- 10 Although it was not within the mandate of this working group to consider post-doctoral fellows, it is important to note that whenever possible and appropriate, they should be included in the realization and planning of the recommendations outlined in this report.
- 11 The SGS Exit Survey indicates that 68.9% of students would “definitely” or “probably” select the same supervisor were they to start their graduate career again. Further, in the same survey, over 70% of students rated the quality of supervision, the quality of feedback/guidance received, and the academic mentorship provided by their supervisors as “good” to “excellent.” School of Graduate Studies, “Graduate Student Exit Survey” (Queen’s University, accessed January 14, 2019). Queen’s administers the questions for the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey annually. For the years 2015 to 2018, an average of 74.9% of Queen’s students selected “probably” or “definitely” when asked if they would select the same faculty supervisor were they to start their graduate careers again. While this report was being finalized, the working group was supplied with the 2019 national and Queen’s-only responses to this survey. The same question was asked and the results were that for all Queen’s graduate student 74.7% would “definitely” or “probably” select the same supervisor again. “Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, Prepared for Queen’s University” (2019), 5. Data on the 2015-2018 survey was supplied by Queen’s University’s Office of Planning and Budgeting.
- 12 Challenges in supervisory relationships are not unique to Queen’s and are reported at a similar level across the country. The national results for the 2019 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey question “If you were to start your graduate career again, would you select the same faculty supervisor?” show that 75.5% of students would “definitely” or “probably” select the same supervisor. At 74.7% (see note above), Queen’s is very close to the national average, as it is in other areas of the survey that consider students’ supervisory experiences. In the coming years, we would like to see Queen’s surpass the national average and become a leader in supporting strong student-supervisor relationships. “Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, National Report” (2019), 5.
- 13 This is true for both students at Queen’s and across the country. The SGS Exit Survey, administered to students who have completed their degree requirements, indicates that 37% of respondents were either pursuing further graduate study, post-doctoral work, or employment in academia; whereas 61% of students would be pursuing employment in business, industry, government, non-government agency, or self-employment. The 2019 Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey reveals a similar trend at the national level, with 32.2% of respondents enrolling in their degrees to start or advance a career in academia and 44.9% of respondents having the goal of starting or advancing an existing career outside of academia. 20.2% of respondents selected “to satisfy my interest in the field, regardless of career prospects” This 20.2% may reflect the fact that students taking this survey are current students who may not have made a decision about their career path, whereas the SGS Exit Survey is administered to students who have completed their degree requirements and more likely have a clearer career direction. “Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, National Report” (2019), 4 and School of Graduate Studies, “Graduate Student Exit Survey” (Queen’s University, Accessed January 14, 2019).
- 14 For the purposes of this report, professional and academic development are not viewed as distinct categories, as they feed into one another in important, meaningful, and unexpected ways. To name a few examples: project management can be applied to both academic and non-academic contexts; training in management may help when managing a lab or TAs/RAs as a professor; and workshops on conference presentations assist with oral communication, generally. The importance of preparing students for careers beyond the academy has long been a topic of discussion within the context of graduate education. There are a number of studies on the topic, including Leonard Cassuto’s *The Graduate School Mess: What Caused It and How We Can Fix It* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
- 15 Queen’s conducted a survey in the summer of 2017 on professional and academic development programming available in programs and departments across campus. This survey revealed a rich diversity of programming across the university. See School of Graduate Studies, “Final Report on the Survey of Graduate and Professional Skills Development Programming” (Queen’s University, July 2017).
- 16 It is vitally important that students understand how to articulate the ways in which the skills and knowledge that they obtain in graduate school translate to the needs of employers. There is often a perceived idea that there is a disconnect between the skills and experience employers seek in candidates and the capabilities that graduate students possess. However, there is growing discussion of the ways in which graduate students can meet employers’ needs though the capabilities they have gained through graduate school. The problem is often about communication – it can sometimes be difficult to articulate how skills translate to diverse employment contexts and sometimes even a lack of awareness that this is the case. Queen’s does offer support. Career Services is available to graduate students to discuss these and many more career-related topics, whether one is choosing an academic or non-academic path.

- 17 For more on the importance and value of community to the graduate student population, please see Chapter 6, "Wellness and Community," in this report.
- 18 Such comments were made by students in the course of our consultations and are supported by the SGS Exit Survey. When asked "Did you know Queen's offers professional development workshops?" 72.2% of people responded "yes" (27.8% responded "no"). Students were then asked "Did you participate in one or more workshops?" 39.8% responded "yes" whereas the other 60.2% reported they did not participate. When asked to select from a list of options why they did not participate in Queen's workshops, over half of the respondents (53.3%) selected "I was too busy with my program and research work." The second most selected option was "I did not feel the workshops were applicable to my needs." School of Graduate Studies, "Graduate Student Exit Survey" (Queen's University, Accessed January 14, 2019). These results indicate that although many students are aware of professional and academic development opportunities on campus, they feel they cannot make the time to engage and do not understand how they may in fact assist in their professional and academic goals and future careers. Feeling that other work is more pressing and so making time for other forms of learning cannot be accommodated may relate to feelings of pressure to overwork – something experienced by students across the province. A recent survey of graduate students in universities across Ontario conducted by the Canadian Federation of Students found that 70% of students reported witnessing or experiencing pressure to overwork. "Pressure to overwork" was defined as "pressure to work late on weekends; do the work of others; do work unrelated to your degree/own academic work; do unsafe work and/or manage an unrealistic workload." The survey also found that marginalized groups experienced higher instances of these pressures. See Canadian Federation of Students, "Not in the Syllabus: Findings from the Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario survey on graduate student mental health" (Toronto: Canadian Federation of Students, 2014): 5, 11.
- 19 Students voiced this in the course of our consultations and the perception is echoed in the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey. In the area of the survey on "Professional Skills Development," students were asked to "rate the quality of the support and training you received" via workshops/advice/tools in a series of 19 areas that encompass both research-related and professional development topics. The results reveal that an average of 12.7% of students rated the quality of support and training they received as "Excellent," 23.5% as "Very good," 27.4% as "Good," 18.7% as "Fair," and 17.6% as "Poor." The two areas in which Queen's was weakest according to the survey was in "advice/workshops/tools on career options outside of academia" followed closely by the same for careers in academia. "Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, Summary Report for All Students, Prepared for Queen's University" (2019), 6. Queen's University's Career Services does deliver exceptional programming and one-on-one support regarding this topic. We need to better communicate and raise awareness of this resource with our academic units and programs. Greater engagement among our students with this resource should help to address this gap.
- 20 In our consultations, student advisors at Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre and the Ban Righ Centre mentioned that they regularly refer students to Swipe it Forward. For more on the program, see "Swipe it Forward Queen's," Queen's University Hospitality Services, <https://dining.queensu.ca/swipeitforward/> (accessed: July 2, 2019).
- 21 For more information on the food bank, see Queen's University AMS Student Government, "AMS Food Bank," <https://myams.org/team-details/food-centre/> (accessed: July 2, 2019).
- 22 In order to allow prospective students to make informed decisions about their school of choice, Queen's seeks to advise eligible students about the minimum amount of funding they can expect to receive should they accept an offer of admission. The SGS Applicant Survey indicates that regardless of whether a student accepts an offer, Queen's is timely in its distribution of financial offers in comparison to competing institutions. Regarding the amount offered, 53.5% respondents who accepted Queen's offer of admission reported that the amount offered was "about the same" to "much better" relative to other offers from competing institutions (22.8% reported that this question was not applicable). 51.3% of those who did not accept Queen's reported that the amount offered by Queen's was "slightly lower" to "much lower" than financial offers received from competing institutions. School of Graduate Studies, "Applicant Survey" (Queen's University, 2017).
- 23 Data on doctoral funding packages across the U6 was supplied by Queen's University's Office of Planning and Budgeting. For information on the U15, the working group also consulted: Group of Canadian Research Universities, "Graduate Student Financial Report at U-15 Universities, 2017-2018" (April 16, 2019).
- 24 For more detail on this budget and to see other sample budgets for students, see the Student Awards website: Office of the University Registrar, Student Awards, "Costs," available <https://www.queensu.ca/studentawards/costs> (accessed July 24, 2019).

- 25** Imposter syndrome refers to the doubting of one's accomplishments, the belief that success is not deserved or legitimately achieved. Among graduate students this may manifest as the belief that they are not deserving of the recognition they have received (an award, for example), that they are not as good as their fellow students, or good enough to be in graduate school at all and somehow slipped through the cracks of the admissions process. These feelings are often accompanied by fear that they will be exposed in this respect. For a Queen's graduate student's account of imposter syndrome, see Sukhmani Billing (with Dylan Ermacora), "Imposter Syndrome – You're Not Alone!" Gradifying: Your Connection to Grad Studies at Queen's (blog), April 18, 2019, <https://www.queensu.ca/connect/grad/2019/04/18/imposter-syndrome-youre-not-alone/> (accessed: July 7, 2019). For a discussion of the impacts of imposter syndrome on marginalized students, see Ramna Safeer, "Imposter Syndrome in Higher Education and its Impact on Marginalized Students," Teaching Talks (blog), December 18, 2018, <https://www.queensu.ca/connect/teachingtalks/2018/12/18/imposter-syndrome-in-higher-education-and-its-impact-on-marginalized-students/> (accessed: July 2, 2019). Ramna is a former Queen's undergraduate student and current Law student at Osgoode Hall Law School. See also "This is us... Basmah Rahman," in Queen's Alumni Review, no. 3 (2018): 16-17, Available: <https://www.queensu.ca/gazette/alumnireview/stories/usbasmah-rahman> (Accessed: July 2, 2019).
- 26** Accounts of food insecurity (defined as the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food) were the most distressing things learned in the course of this study. Awareness of this among student populations across North America is growing. Food insecurity can correlate with other mental and physical health conditions and disproportionately affects some groups, including racialized groups, single mothers, and Indigenous people. To learn more about this issue centered around a study of graduate and undergraduate students at Queen's, see the forthcoming article by Elaine Power, Julia Dietrich, Zoe Walter, and Susan Belyea, "I look so normal and put together... people wouldn't even believe it': The Invisibility of student food insecurity at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada." The working group is grateful to Elaine Power for sharing a draft of the article.
- 27** At the time this report was being finalized, we learned that a new model for Student Wellness Services' Counselling Services was being introduced. This new model will allow for more same day appointments, which would allow students in immediate distress faster access to support.
- 28** The Okanagan Charter "calls on post-secondary institutions to embed health and well-being in all aspects of campus culture, and to lead human and environmental well-being promotion action locally and globally." For more, see Campus Wellness Project, "Queen's Adopts Okanagan Charter," available <https://www.queensu.ca/campuswellnessproject/okanagan-charter-o> (Accessed July 5, 2019). To read the charter, see Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges (2015), available: <https://www.queensu.ca/campuswellnessproject/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.qcwswww/files/files/Okanagan-Charter.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2019).
- 29** In line with Queen's Strategic Framework, the Campus Wellness Project seeks to create a campus-wide wellness framework to foster well-being for students, staff, and faculty. The findings, recommendations, and framework of the project are forthcoming. For more information, visit <https://www.queensu.ca/campuswellnessproject/>.
- 30** Eleftherios Soleas, Heather Coe-Nesbitt, Nadia Arghash, and Anoushka Moucessian, "Wellness Report", prepared for the Society of Graduate and Professional Students and affiliates (Draft report) (The Wellness Research Collective, Queen's University, 2018).
- 31** Indeed, of all the consultations held by the working group, Graduate Assistants were the group from whom we received the most enthusiastic response. They responded quickly and in strong numbers to requests for consultations on the student experience and success from their perspectives. Their care and investment in their students stood out as exemplary. We heard more than once from faculty, students, and staff that Graduate Assistants are a central pillar in graduate education.
- 32** In the SGS Exit Survey, one student reported a poor relationship they had with their supervisor and a lack of support when the issue was raised. They wrote that their "experience will certainly factor into my future financial contributions to the university." Others reported that their poor experiences, whether with a supervisor, the program, or the university generally would cause them to not recommend their program or even Queen's to others. One student commented that "I will not recommend the programme to others in fact, I will steer them away." Another wrote of their experiences being "sour" and "I would not recommend this program, or this school, to any friends or family members. I do not like the lack of respect that was shown to me." School of Graduate Studies, "Graduate Student Exit Survey" (Queen's University, Accessed January 14, 2019).

- 33** For example, in 2018 the Helen Howard Graduate Student Reading Room was opened. While well received and intended to be access by graduate students only, undergraduate students have begun to use the space.
- 34** In the SGS Exit Survey and our consultations, many students commented on the uninviting, dark, out-dated, and dirty state of office space allocated to graduate students in their programs. Such conditions were cited as not conducive to productivity nor feeling valued by their programs or the university. School of Graduate Studies, "Graduate Student Exit Survey" (Queen's University, Accessed January 14, 2019).
- 35** See the discussion of the PhD-Community Initiative in Chapter 5 of this report. This program is exemplary of the graduate desire to engage and become a part of the Kingston community.
- 36** Food insecurity is defined as the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.
- 37** See note 18 for more on the pressure to overwork.
- 38** See note 26 and the Spotlight: Food Affordability and Graduate Students on page 44 for more information.
- 39** Eleftherios Soleas, Heather Coe-Nesbitt, Nadia Arghash, and Anoushka Moucessian, "Wellness Report", prepared for the Society of Graduate and Professional Students and affiliates (Draft report) (The Wellness Research Collective, Queen's University, 2018).
- 40** Conversations with Student Wellness Services staff suggest that two weeks is the average wait time for appointments. With the new model for counselling appointments, mentioned in note 27 above, it is hoped that wait times will be reduced significantly.
- 41** The Student Wellness Services Annual Report 2017-2018 notes that there has been "Increased expertise within the mental health team to support an increasing culturally diverse student population and students who identify as LGBTQ+2S." Student Wellness Services, "Annual Report 2017-2018" (Queen's University, 2018), 7.
- 42** At the undergraduate level, the intensive orientation process alerts students to many of the resources available on campus, from writing support, health care, to student clubs and student centres.
- 43** See note 25 above.
- 44** See notes 20 and 21 for more information.
- 45** See note 26 and page 44 of this report for more on food insecurity at Queen's.

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Consultations

Centre for Teaching and Learning

Division of Student Affairs staff and executives (Career Services, Queen's University International Centre, Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre, Ban Righ Centre, Athletics and Recreation, University Registrar, Student Wellness Services, Student Academic Success Services, Community Housing).

Domestic and international masters and doctoral students/candidates

Graduate Coordinators

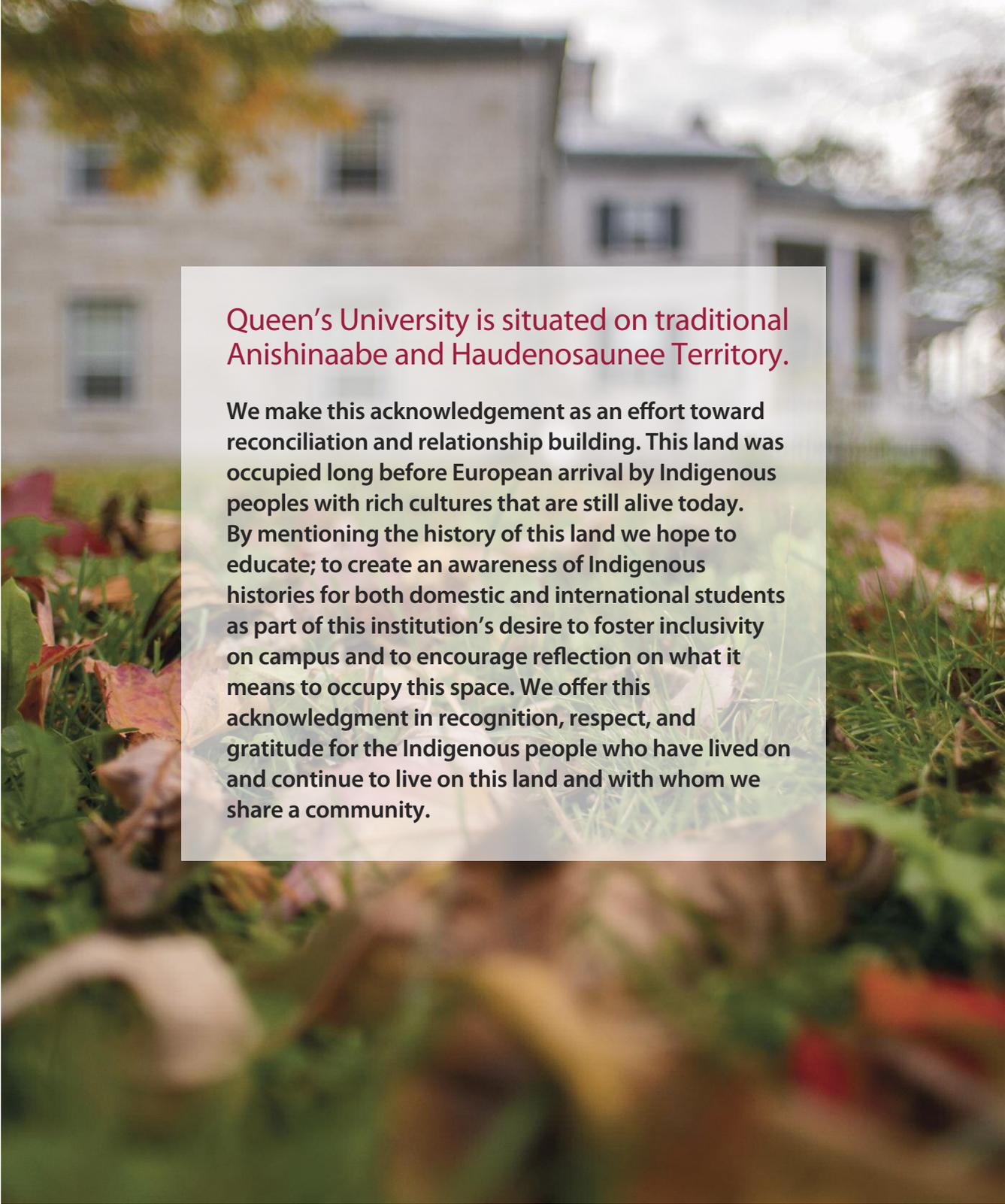
Graduate Program Assistants

Graduate Student Life Advisory Group

Faculty

Office of Planning and Budgeting, Institutional Research and Planning

Society of Graduate and Professional Students



Queen's University is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory.

We make this acknowledgement as an effort toward reconciliation and relationship building. This land was occupied long before European arrival by Indigenous peoples with rich cultures that are still alive today. By mentioning the history of this land we hope to educate; to create an awareness of Indigenous histories for both domestic and international students as part of this institution's desire to foster inclusivity on campus and to encourage reflection on what it means to occupy this space. We offer this acknowledgment in recognition, respect, and gratitude for the Indigenous people who have lived on and continue to live on this land and with whom we share a community.

