Dear SGS Community: Faculty, Staff, Graduate Students, and Post-doctoral Fellows

On behalf of the School of Graduate Studies, I want to thank you for your patience and resilience as we develop and evolve our contingency plans in this unprecedented time. Before addressing any other matters, I want to highlight that it is imperative that we all focus on our well-being and support one another during this trying time. Many of us will continue to work remotely while others will take this opportunity to focus exclusively on their health, family and community. Please know that we understand your challenges and are here to support you in whatever ways we can. To that end, SGS is operating remotely to process applications, administer awards, and to offer online support in many other areas. We are here for you and we are confident that we will get through this together.

In the last two weeks, I have been heartened to learn of the many ways in which our community members are extending their support to each other. Faculty members have volunteered their time and effort to participate in creating contingency plans, for instance, and faculty and graduate students alike have been experimenting with alternate delivery modes for course material in the absence of physical classroom space. Staff have been incredibly cooperative in adapting to online applications and students have been constantly taking advantage of openings to check in on one another through phone calls and impromptu online support groups.

I wish to acknowledge the efforts of other members of the university community who are working hard to continue to deliver programming and support, and to look out for the health and safety of the community. The Division of Student Affairs and its units have been working diligently to ensure that international and domestic students continue to receive the counselling, academic, professional development, and other support they always have, albeit remotely. I encourage you to reach out. IT Services has been incredibly responsive in providing adaptive support for things such as remote thesis defenses, Physical Plant Services works diligently to maintain our campus, and Queen’s Library continues to determine how to best meet your needs and is available for remote support. I also wish to thank the medical teams and staff at our affiliated hospitals who are on the front line in providing care for our Kingston community.
SGS and our partners are committed to supporting you as work through your studies – whatever the stage. For those who plan to defend your thesis and graduate this spring, SGS has developed guidelines for remote PhD examinations option. For those who are conducting research or writing, we have provided a guide on best practices in remote graduate supervision, as well as tips on maintaining work-life balance and ideas about how to maintain productivity in our FAQs. Importantly, our high standards and our policies will remain unchanged as we continue to bridge the transition to remote working models. In addition, we will also be working hard over the next couple of weeks to pivot many of our professional development and writing camps to online modes such that we can continue to offer extensive support to our community. I understand that some of the challenges you will face will be financial. For those of you who need, it please apply to the Queen’s COVID-19 related emergency bursary.

In light of the rapidly changing nature of the current environment, I encourage you to regularly review our SGS COVID-19 website for updates and support. It is important to me and the whole SGS staff to maintain contact and open lines of communication with our community. We will continue to offer our live Q&A sessions and welcome you to reach out to sgscomms@queensu.ca to express any concerns or seek guidance.

I applaud you for your efforts to be there for one another during these turbulent times—I know it has not been an easy adjustment for any of us. Rest assured that you have my best wishes, and my full support, as we navigate the uncertainties ahead together.

Sincerely,

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