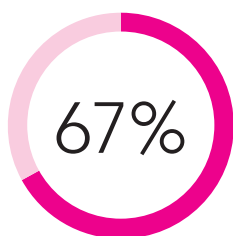


Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health at the University of Ottawa

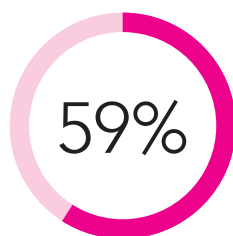
The University of Ottawa Graduate Students' Association (GSAÉD) is united with 12 other graduate student unions in Ontario through the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. Together, our Federation engaged in a two-year research project to identify and document the experiences of Ontario graduate students that negatively affect their mental health. Through the Not in the Syllabus survey, just over 2,000 graduate students from across the province were asked about their experiences with bullying and harassment on their respective campuses along with the resulting impacts on their mental health. This factsheet outlines some of the provincial survey results and highlights the experiences of graduate students at the University of Ottawa.

What impacts graduate student mental health?

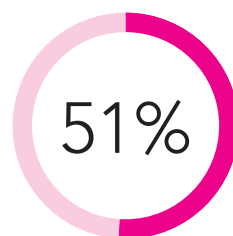
Survey respondents identified the following factors as having negative impacts on their mental health:



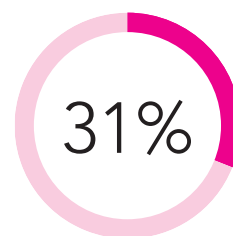
time to completion anxiety



paying tuition fees and other institutional costs



not feeling properly supported by their academic institution



anxiety around seeking and/or affording mental health support

University of Ottawa graduate students described their experiences, verbatim:



My supervisor said that my written skills in my second language were atrocious, and wanted to contact the dean to try to get me removed from the program.



As a T.A. I have experienced angry students harassing me for marks, which has included being yelled at.



I feel pressure to overwork - I find it hard at times to balance my coursework, research assistantship, and volunteer duties all within a week so I often find myself working late on weekends to make up for it.

In their own words, University of Ottawa graduate students described how such experiences impacted their mental health:



It killed my self-confidence and my grades started slipping.



Like I was worthless and that I was unable to complete my degree.



Overwhelmed and anxious; it also stressed me out quite a bit because I can't neglect my research assistantship. My funding depends on that.



It made me feel like quitting school and attending another university.

The GSAÉD is keenly aware of the impacts behaviour and environmental factors have on their members and feels strongly that the University of Ottawa can improve its support of graduate students by implementing the following recommendations:

- 1.** Ensure that graduate student mental health services offer flexible hours, including evening hours. This is necessary to accommodate graduate student schedules, which often involve being on campus in the evenings and on weekends, while also taking classes, facilitating labs and teaching during regular business hours.
- 2.** Ensure that the different counseling services at the University of Ottawa work together to provide more comprehensive and inclusive support for students that address the intersectionality of their needs.
- 3.** Hire an on-campus counselor that will be available exclusively to graduate students and be familiar with the unique challenges that graduate students face, whether they are mature students, student parents, international students, full-time, part-time, or special status.