

Re: To Reverse Decision on International Graduate Student Employment

To,
Principal Patrick Deane, Queen's University
Dean Fahim Quadir, School of Graduate Studies

14/10/2020

Re: To Reverse Decision on International Graduate Student Employment

Dear Dr. Quadir and Dr. Deane,

We are writing to you as representatives of Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS) and Public Service Alliance of Canada Local 901 (PSAC 901), regarding the University's decision to not employ International Graduate Students as Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants this academic year, if they are currently not residing in Canada.

Over the last few weeks, numerous international students have reached out to us in great panic. The abrupt decision to deny their employment in the middle of a pandemic was not only poorly communicated, but also discriminatory on the basis of immigration status and current location of residence.

We submit the following for your consideration:

1. International Graduate Students are temporary residents of Canada, with valid residential addresses in this country, Canadian bank accounts, and valid Social Insurance Numbers. Not only are they residents of Canada – either temporary or permanent, they are also deeply rooted members of our Kingston community. While we understand that there might be legal challenges to employing new or incoming International Graduate Students (who are yet to receive their SIN numbers), for ongoing students, this is not the case.
2. The conditions that currently restrict many of them from re-entry into Canada are exceedingly temporary and constantly evolving. Given a choice, many international members would be here. When the University decided to shift coursework online, and when it was recommended that all possible work be carried out remotely, it was never communicated that the current place of residence would be important to be eligible for work. In fact, in the past this has never been the case.

Since this wasn't clearly communicated, our members did not make immediate plans to return to Canada because doing so would risk the health and safety of themselves and others. Now that this decision has suddenly and abruptly been imposed, many students are having to risk coming back to Canada in order to work, and are being forced to pay exorbitant travel costs. Some of them were also forced to leave their fieldwork incomplete. Those who aren't able to return because of health and safety risks or travel restrictions will be denied employment. We consider this to be insensitive and, considering that many international students are also racialized members of our community, it is an inequitable and unfortunate treatment.

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3. International Graduate Students are among the most financially precarious student groups on Queen's campus for many reasons. The SGS [Report on Graduate Student Success](#) clearly outlines the depth and seriousness of this precarity. The financial and psychological consequences of employment loss is even more significant because of this.

For the above reasons, we implore you to reverse this decision and begin to offer employment contracts to International Graduate Students regardless of their current place of residence.

Yours sincerely,

Signed:

Rohit Revi
Equity Officer, PSAC 901

Anthony Lomax,
VP Community, SGPS