

GSA ADVOCACY WINS 2020

Coursework

No-disadvantage WAM policy

- GSA strongly advocated for the University to implement a policy where poor grades during the pandemic do not affect students' Weighted Average Mark (WAM)
- Temporary changes to WAM were introduced to resolve this issue.
- The WAM policy was extended for Semester Two.

Covid-19 leave policy

- GSA recommended an expansion of graduate researchers leave and extension entitlements for those experiencing impacts of Covid-19.
- Up to 60 days of paid Covid-19 leave is now available for graduate researchers with stipends.
- In addition, graduate researchers are now able to access unlimited unpaid leave.

Research

Covid-19 extensions policy

- In extensions advocacy, PhD candidates can now apply for 12-week Covid-19 extensions if significant productivity has been lost, or up to 26 weeks if their research project was substantially changed.
- Initially, extensions were only available for PhD candidates close to completion.
- The University has recently announced this support will be available to all PhD candidates.

Privacy concerns during extension applications

- GSA raised privacy concerns as graduate researchers could be asked to reveal personal information in extension applications.
- Students are now able to inform Student Equity and Disability Support of their circumstances rather than providing sensitive information to supervisors and faculty staff.

Financial

Financial assistance for graduate students

- GSA recommended that the University provide financial assistance for students experiencing financial hardship due to Covid-19.
- The University's Emergency Support Fund (ESF) for coursework students achieved this recommendation.
- Furthermore, GSA successfully advocated for the ESF to include graduate researchers without stipends.
- The ESF was extended for Semester Two.

Technology assistance

- GSA recommended that the University provide hardship funding for students to set up a home workstation for online study.
- This was achieved through the 'IT upgrade and study support' dedicated category of the Emergency Support Fund.