



## **GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO SUPPORT FOR ON-CAMPUS OMBUDSPERSON**

To our campus community,

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is committed to advocating for the continuous improvement of the academic and social experience of University of Waterloo graduate students. To that end, the GSA—in partnership with the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA)—is advocating for the creation of an independent, on-campus ombudsperson position.

During their studies, graduate and undergraduate students may experience conflicts with faculty members, advisors, and/or members of university administration. While the GSA supports ongoing efforts of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (GSPA) to improve the graduate student experience, we believe that students can face serious conflicts and power imbalances requiring impartial mediation that existing policies and campus stakeholders cannot fully provide.

At a high level, an ombudsperson will work to ensure that student rights are not violated. There are numerous Canadian universities that employ an independent ombudsperson to oversee dispute resolution on campus. The University of Waterloo employed an ombudsperson until it adopted an advocacy and policy-oriented approach to dispute resolution.

The University of Waterloo should reinstitute an independent ombudsperson position to support procedural fairness for all members of our campus community. An independent ombudsperson should be empowered to provide a safe, confidential environment in which students can discuss a University-related problem or concern.

The scope of the ombudsperson should include academic issues (e.g., grades, scholastic offenses, program requirements, instructor conflicts, etc.) and non-academic issues (e.g., tuition, residence, etc.). Most importantly, the ombudsperson should be impartial—providing all members of our campus community with an independent stakeholder equipped to facilitate equitable dispute resolution processes.

Together with WUSA, the GSA Council and management team will continue to advocate for the creation of an independent, on-campus ombudsperson position at the University of Waterloo.

Yours respectfully,

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Speaker of Council

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President, GSA

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