



## **GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO**

### **SUPPORT FOR MANDATORY MENTAL WELLNESS TRAINING FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

To our campus community,

Although some graduate students are provided with teaching assistant (TA) training prior to becoming TAs at the University of Waterloo, an important gap exists: this training does not include sufficient mental wellness content. We, the Graduate Student Association of the University of Waterloo (GSA-UW), are concerned about the lack of such universalized training in our membership and believe that the introduction of a mandatory mental wellness training module will support our membership serving as TAs, and for all graduate students.

Over the last few months, we conducted a graduate student experience survey (“Vital Signs 2020”) and a COVID-19 Impact survey. Both surveys identified mental wellness as a key issue for graduate students and suggest that associated supports need to be improved. To that end, the GSA-UW prioritises the mental wellbeing of all graduate students and believes that the University of Waterloo should provide students with improved mental wellness supports and services.

Like professors and select administrative staff members, TAs are front line contacts for students. A mental wellness training module for TAs will provide a skills development platform to support their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of our broader student community.

The GSA-UW supports the implementation of a paid 1-2 hour online module for new TAs that is recorded as a milestone on transcripts. The GSA-UW supports equitable and fair compensation for time spent in training as graduate employees of UW and therefore requests that graduate TAs complete the module with pay. We are happy to pilot the mental wellness module with members of our Council, which has broad graduate student representation from across all faculties, prior to a full roll-out.

If you have any questions about this open letter, please contact us at [gsa-wellness@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:gsa-wellness@uwaterloo.ca)

Yours respectfully,

**David Billedeau**  
President

**Cindy Hoi Ting Yeung**  
Vice President, Administration

**Zabeen Khamisa**  
Vice President, Communications

**Matthew Robbins**  
Speaker of the GSA Council

**Ashley Ryan**  
Student Wellness Coordinator