

Dear Provost Strzelczyk and President Alan Shepard,

I write in support of Western University's Graduate Teaching Assistants.

The strike-breaking tactics of Western University constitutes academic dishonesty. Non-professional proctors have been brought in to administer exams, and the integrity of exams is being called into question. This is damaging Western's reputation as a research university. In addition, private security have been hired to do the job of campus police, wasting the university's budget, when it would be more effective to simply give Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) what they demand. Western must take pedagogical responsibility for its undergraduates and meet Graduate Teaching Assistant demands.

PSAC 610's negotiating team on behalf of GTAs at Western seeks the following:

A real monetary increase in wages for all GTAs with no clawbacks or redistribution:

GTA earnings need to be significantly increased to a living wage without any decrease in other guaranteed funds, such as the WGRS.

A housing stipend to match the high cost of housing in London, Ontario:

Rents in London have increased 2.7% over last year; however, a year ago, the average rent in London, Ontario was reported at a 23% increase over 2022.

Extended eligibility for Year X GTAs:

Studies show that five years of guaranteed funding is essential as completing a PhD, regardless of discipline, takes an average of 5 years. This is the case for PhD students at Western University and across Canada and the United States. Withdrawing reliable, guaranteed financial support in the fifth year of the doctorate intensifies graduate students' already challenging circumstances.

Guaranteed wages for proctors and markers that are equal to teaching assistant wages:

Proctoring and marking are listed as part of routine GTA duties. Therefore, they should be equal to posted GTA wages.

These reasonable bargaining demands would ensure that Western's GTAs are more empowered to effect the university's teaching mission. Essential to almost every part of the University's strategic directions, GTAs, like all workers, deserve wage increases commensurate with the rise in the cost of living. To begin to approach the minimum earnings to meet the cost of living in London, Ontario, a significant increase in wage is necessary. GTAs try to make ends meet by taking on second, third, and fourth jobs; racking up debt; and accessing the union's food bank. As a result, GTAs are unable to fulfill their myriad roles while maintaining their physical and mental health.

GTAs are classroom instructors, partners in community-engaged teaching and learning initiatives, instructional and curriculum designers, graders and assessors, proctors, guest lecturers, and much more. GTAs provide essential support for the success of Western's faculty and undergraduates.

I urge you to instruct the Senior Policy and Operations Committee to allocate more resources for GTAs so that a new deal can be reached and this strike action can end.

Sincerely,
A Concerned Member of the Western Community