



FGS Continues Stonewalling and Neglecting Student Welfare: Update on the June 5 Meeting with FGS on Enrollment Blocks

Dear FGS and Faculty Relations,

As representatives of CUPE 3903, YUGSA, and concerned graduate student representatives, we write to put the administration on notice that we recognize that your stonewalling and your refusal to engage in meaningful discussions will harm graduate students. Graduate students deserve to know about the harsh and punitive policies the York administration is enacting, and even more, deserve care.

Given the recent withdrawal by FGS and Faculty Relations from a process around extensions, and the inadequate responses we have been given around enrollment blocks that we will explain below, it has become clear to us that we need to take it upon ourselves to let graduate students know that FGS policies are disregarding equity concerns and making students more precarious. We are therefore issuing this as an open letter, so that we may also say to graduate students that CUPE 3903 and YUGSA are united in demanding that the York University administration live up to its stated commitment to equity, and act with fairness and compassion towards all graduate students.

This is the second open letter we are writing to update graduate students about our ongoing negotiations with members of the FGS administration. Representatives of YUGSA and CUPE 3903 have been meeting with FGS regarding two critical issues. First, we have been raising questions about the alarming rates of program extension petitions denied by FGS for doctoral students in their 7th and 8th years. Second, we have been expressing concerns about the harsh terms of the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Milestone. The Proposal Milestone threatens students with advisement blocks and eventually expulsion for delays in proposals beyond term 9. Our previous [April 4 open letter](#) outlined concerns around these policies, as well as demands for more accountability and transparency from the FGS administration. After releasing that letter, we contacted FGS and Faculty Relations for a meeting to discuss the contents of that letter. Though we had to engage in negotiations simply to have more than 30 minutes

on the many issues outlined in the letter, on June 5 we ultimately did meet with FGS and Faculty Relations for one hour. We are now issuing this second open letter to update graduate students on the meeting and address the FGS team who have now refused a follow up meeting on extension petitions with representatives of both CUPE 3903 and YUGSA in attendance.

We regret to say that our June 5 meeting with FGS and Faculty Relations regarding program milestones and enrollment blocks was largely unproductive, and left us with many unanswered questions and new concerns. At the June 5 meeting, we spoke about what we see as the punitive framing and enforcement of the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Milestone. We asked for evidence of how FGS has determined underlying causes of students being unable to meet program milestones and applying for extensions, and what evidence has informed the FGS response to any underlying issues; to date we have not seen any evidence. We repeatedly raised concerns about the impact of both the threat and implementation of enrollment blocks, particularly on international students; to date these concerns have not been addressed. We named the administration's obligation to design policies through an equity lens to ensure that students already experiencing lack of accessibility and precarity are not disproportionately affected; we have seen no moves in this direction. We also made clear that York graduate students are not opposed to program milestones: what is unacceptable are measures that punish students for financial struggles, family circumstances, and accessibility needs. What is unacceptable is York's failure to provide adequate resources. Where adequate resources do not exist, we urge the administration to reconsider these coercive tactics to pressure students to complete their degree.

Instead of engaging with our concerns in good faith, FGS representatives at the June 5 meeting consistently took the position that our concerns were rooted in misconceptions and an incomplete understanding of this policy. We did hear some accountability from FGS representatives for these gaps in communication and a promised plan to fix them by launching information campaigns on the terms of these policies. Yet an information campaign will not alter the harsh conditions outlined in the policy, it will not protect students from threats of de-enrollment and expulsion, and an information campaign emphasizing punishment for delays in proposal defence certainly will not contribute towards an encouraging and productive academic environment.

FGS representatives spent a significant portion of the June 5 meeting explaining the Milestone policies to us and discussing at length the program requirement to declare a supervisor. We must point out that the issue FGS chose to focus on misrepresents our concerns and contributed to the discussion being unproductive. The Supervisory Milestone has not been raised by students, in either meetings or written documents

addressed to FGS. Our position on the Proposal Milestone and extension petition denials was explained in the April 4 open letter (see above), with our demands clearly outlined for the administration.

In the June 5 meeting, FGS representatives claimed that the Proposal Milestone is to take effect starting 2026. However, starting in Fall 2024, students started receiving warnings of enrollment blocks that would be imposed in Winter 2025 for failure to comply with the Proposal Milestone. When we raised these warnings in the meeting, FGS representatives claimed ignorance of notifications relating to proposals, took little accountability for inconsistent applications of this policy, and asserted that departments may be issuing these warnings as per their internal guidelines or due to incomplete information. Consistent misdirection and offloading responsibility to GPDs and GPAs regarding enrollment blocks is not only a shameful abdication of responsibility, it is patently untrue.

Representatives of YUGSA and CUPE 3903 understand too well the consequences for graduate students should a policy of enrollment blocks go into effect. YUGSA has shared its [recommendations](#) with the Academic Policy and Planning Committee, emphasizing the potential harms that this policy enshrines towards the most marginalized members of our communities—international students, disabled students, caretakers, and students who are working multiple jobs to compensate for exploitative graduate funding packages at York. We have now communicated these concerns at FGS Council, the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, multiple meetings with FGS administration only to be met with denials and inaction.

Beyond launching information campaigns, does FGS have a real plan to address and rectify these grave issues? Or will they continue to risk the academic and personal well being of doctoral students? We want to be clear that we reject an individualistic approach to systemic issues that hamper students advancing in their programs, and that leave them to struggle and make appeals on their own. If students are not meeting program milestones in significant numbers, then policies must be designed with recognition of systemic problems at York. If significant numbers of students are behind in their programs, has FGS sought to understand why? And how does FGS believe that threatening students with de-enrollment, or acting on such threats and then jeopardizing international students' status and student livelihood will actually help students to catch up?

It is further deeply concerning that the current FGS administration has weaponised the language of care to frame these policies. [Using the pretext of greater collaboration amongst cohorts](#), the Milestone policy resorts to swift and punitive measures. FGS has expressed appreciation for YUGSA's urging to centre care and support in student

matters, while deploying policies that dismiss the larger institutional context of austerity and the *withdrawal* of care, student services, and employment opportunities for graduate students. Enrollment blocks threaten academic progress, loss of TAs, and endanger the status of international students; co-opting frameworks of care to present this policy is dangerous and manipulative. On the contrary, we are not seeing an administration that acts with care; we are seeing procedures being wielded as punishment.

We write this open letter after being stonewalled persistently for our attempts to alert the administration of endangering student welfare. FGS is failing its students: the administration must act now, or risk further losing credibility with the student body.

In closing, we would like to remind you of the demands in our April 4, 2025 letter:

1. Respect the Ontario Human Rights Code and the CUPE 3903 Collective Agreement by resolving the grievances filed by CUPE 3903 regarding Code-based extensions
2. Commit to delivering adequate training for administrators who are responsible for adjudicating Code-based petitions, including creating clear guidelines about what constitutes adequate documentation for extension requests
3. Commit to providing clear reasons in writing for each petition denial
4. Create a transparent and accountable petitions appeal process in which the original adjudicator is not also the person deciding the appeal
5. Recognize that Code-based extensions are collective agreement rights that can be enforced through the grievance process, and not simply an academic matter
6. Remove completion-related enrolment blocks for graduate students currently enrolled at the university
7. Clearly communicate the enforcement of timelines/milestones for future students
8. Ensure that all York's required portals, websites, and processes work as designed, and that graduate students are not penalized if they do not
9. Maintain York's own posted timelines for research ethics approval and enforce standards on departments and faculty for response timelines
10. Act with fairness and compassion towards all graduate students by considering factors such as economic need and immigration status when considering completion milestones and extension applications