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Dear students,

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) at Memorial University recognizes that the past months have been extraordinarily stressful and disruptive. Students around the world have shown a great deal of resilience and have worked hard to continue their studies in a remote format while at the same time balancing their personal responsibilities. However, it is understandable that performance, as indexed by GPA and other academic indicators, is likely to be negatively affected by the pandemic. This only adds to student anxieties about the future as they understandably worry how this record will be evaluated by graduate admissions committees and decisions around funding eligibility.

SGS would like to allay some of those fears by publicly affirming that we will not be using marks obtained since the pandemic hit in March 2020 in our calculations for eligibility for our funding. We will also be flexible regarding minimum entrance requirements. Further, although we are not in a position to directly make admissions decisions, we will continue to encourage units to factor in the impact of the pandemic on students in their admissions decisions and to use a broad range of candidate requirements when assessing application files. This is consistent with our support of holistic admissions practices which requires a consideration of the range of abilities, experience, and skills that can be relevant qualities for a specific program.

I know that equity deserving groups are more likely to experience challenges related to the pandemic and this further emphasizes why policies aimed at better mitigating these challenges are more important than ever. The School of Graduate Studies acknowledges the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in graduate education. This is reflected in our [diversity statement](#) and the work of the SGS committee on diversity. We are mindful of the need and our role to increase access to graduate education for all students, but particularly those who contribute to the diversity in our graduate programs. If you are an Indigenous student or a Black Canadian student applying for admission to a doctoral program, we can offer additional supports, including an application fee waiver, to help you with your application for admission. Please contact akim@mun.ca for more information.

I encourage students to directly address their unique challenges and experiences during the pandemic in their statements of interest. These statements can explicitly discuss student concerns regarding changes to university grading policies and/or personal or professional challenges encountered due to the pandemic or other life circumstances.

I hope this statement will relieve some of the stress that students and families are experiencing. And, I hope it will get us closer to an admissions process that is more equitable and that encourages individuals to both care for themselves and to build a healthier, more humane, and just world.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aimée Surprenant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aimée Surprenant, PhD
Associate Vice-President (Academic) and
Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Resources:

How to apply and programs: <https://www.mun.ca/become/graduate/apply/>

Graduate Orientation resource: <https://www.mun.ca/sgs/orientation/>

For International Students: <https://www.mun.ca/become/graduate/international/>