A statement has been circulating around campus regarding graduate funding in comparison to the poverty line, suggesting graduate students to refuse to TA. Concerns surrounding low-income graduate student employment are valid, as many of us have felt the financial stress of having to balance our incomes with rising costs of living. The issue of employment income aligns as a major part of our Collective Agreement, which governs the working relationship between graduate students and the University of Calgary. This is an agreement that your GSA’s Labour Relations Committee (LRC) will be renegotiating later this year.

The Labour Relations Committee (LRC) strongly advises graduate assistants against any refusal of work for reasons other than those outlined in our Collective Agreement. Doing so could lead to termination and affect your ability to hold future Graduate Assistantships.

In the coming months, your GSA will be negotiating our current Collective Agreement with the University of Calgary; this is the appropriate avenue through which we seek better funding as Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants. We invite you to connect with your LRC at lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca to discuss ways to improve our current Collective Agreement to better support graduate students or to be involved with the bargaining process. (lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca)

The LRC advocates for graduate students to not work beyond their contracted duties. You should not be pressured or even encouraged to work beyond your assigned hours and duties. If this is something you have experienced, contact lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca to discuss how this problem can be resolved. Your contract is a legal agreement between you and your employer, and you have the right to seek fair resolution without fear of repercussion.

Your GSA maintains a priority of advocating for adequate funding supports for graduate students. In the 2021-22 school year, your GSA VP Academic and President partnered with the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) to increase the minimum funding for PhD students and to create a minimum funding policy for thesis-based master’s students that takes into account an increasing cost of living. While the settled amount is lower than our initial targets, graduate students on campus now have a minimum funding policy in place, which provides a good starting point to improve upon. All stakeholders within the FGS and the GSA have agreed to updating this funding policy on a periodic basis. Meanwhile, your GSA continues to advocate for increased funding support for our members at the institutional, provincial, and federal levels, and we would love your support therein! To engage with scholarship and minimum funding advocacy, please contact James, your VP Academic (vpa.gsa@ucalgary.ca), and for external advocacy, please contact AC, your VP External (vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca).

If at any point, you are experiencing financial difficulties, the GSA has multiple bursary programs available to address financial needs. Please visit our Bursaries page for details: gsa.ucalgary.ca/bursaries

Best,

Saaka Sulemana Saaka
GSA President

Keira Gunn
AVP Labour & Labour Relations Committee Chair