

There have been some concerns raised with regard to the recent changes in the tuition fee of the international students in the professional Master of Engineering (MEng) program. The purpose of this communication is to provide clarity on the raised concerns.

The tuition increase this year was relatively higher than in recent years and the decision to increase the tuition was a part of a multi-year planning process to bring our rates in-line with comparable programs across the province. Our tuition rate was much lower than the rates at similar programs in Ontario and had not been increased proportionally in the past few years. Hence, the relatively higher increase in tuition this year is to appropriately adjust the tuition amount to ensure that we have sustained resources to maintain the high quality of our program.

The tuition rate decision was made prior to the pandemic. We recognize the extraordinary challenges faced by our student community due to pandemic and we understand that tuition is a significant investment, especially for international students. However, the costs of maintaining the quality of our program have also been affected by the pandemic, necessitating that we proceed with the tuition increase in order to continue to offer a quality program. We have made significant investment in the resources needed to ensure high quality development and delivery of our courses in online format.

We understand that there are concerns with regard to sharing the tuition increase information with students. The information about the tuition fees and tuition payments are handled by the Office of the Registrar. In all our correspondence with students, we refer them to the Office of the Registrar website for information related to the tuition amount and the payment methods. Until the new tuition amounts are posted by the Registrar's Office, the SGPS Offer Letters provide the previous year's tuition amounts as an "Estimated tuition". We understand that this may not be the best estimate and we are currently working with SGPS to improve this process and provide more accurate estimates of the tuition fee in future Offer Letters.

Some questions have also been raised with regard to the financial assistance available to MEng students, particularly international MEng students. We would like to emphasize that the MEng is a self-funded program and students are responsible to cover the cost of the program. Hence, the Faculty of Engineering does not offer financial support to MEng students (domestic or international). However, for unanticipated one-time emergency financial needs, MEng students are eligible to apply to different financial support programs offered through the Office of the Registrar and SGPS. It is important to note that some of these financial support programs are restricted to domestic students only (international students are not eligible to apply) due to restrictions related to the funding sources and are beyond Western's control.

We understand the unprecedented challenges our Western community members (student, faculty and staff) are facing in these extraordinary times and we are making every effort to ensure high standards in the delivery of online courses that support effective learning experiences and learning outcomes.

Sincerely,

Graduate Office, Faculty of Engineering