

2020-21 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

May 13, 2020

Background

Graduate students who work as graduate assistants while pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees provide a valuable service to the university. Many teach undergraduate classes while others support faculty in scholarly and sponsored research activities. To be competitive in the recruitment and retention of high quality graduate students, it is important for the university to provide compensation packages that are comparable with those offered by peer institutions. The key components of the total compensation package are a stipend, tuition assistance, and health insurance benefit.

Graduate Stipends

One of the primary goals of Virginia Tech during the 1980's was to build a graduate compensation program that was competitive with those offered by comparable institutions. Across the campus, graduate assistants have a variety of responsibilities. To recognize the differences in services performed by these students, the university created a stipend scale that defines ranges of stipend amounts, providing academic and support unit's flexibility in compensating graduate assistants. The levels within the stipend table have been adjusted over the years to remain competitive.

To respond to increasing competition for quality graduate students among peer institutions, the graduate student stipend scale was revised for Fall 2003 to better position Virginia Tech departments as compared to their national peers and reflect the minimum stipend levels authorized by the National Science Foundation. The Fall 2004 stipend scale added 10 additional stipend steps, numbered 41-50, to increase the university's competitive position in attracting outstanding Ph.D. students. In 2004-05, the graduate stipend scale was enhanced to function as 50 pay ranges (Attachment). These ranges provide flexibility in situations where a defined level of resources does not exactly match one of the existing steps, and allow for an actual stipend to be established within the range of a step.

In 2011-12, an academic year fixed dollar supplement was added to the graduate stipend scale to help offset university assigned costs such as the health fee. As a result, the graduate assistant stipend is currently comprised of two components: 1) a base stipend and 2) a fixed supplement. For administrative efficiency and processing, the two components are combined into the traditional stipend scale. As of January 26, 2020, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,156 per month, which falls within step 13 of the 2019-20 stipend scale.

Tuition Assistance

In the 1990's, the university developed a more comprehensive program of tuition remission for graduate students serving on assistantships. The tuition program is financed by four sources including: the General Fund appropriation for graduate student financial assistance, a tuition remission program in the Educational and General budget, tuition payments planned in the budgets of externally sponsored grants and contracts, and private funds. The tuition remission program for graduate students on assistantship includes the remission of tuition, mandatory E&G fees (excluding the state assigned Commonwealth Capital and Equipment Fee), and non-executive graduate program fees. Tuition remission benefits are provided on a per-semester basis for the duration of the contracted period.

In the case of an early termination of an assistantship, tuition remission benefits are prorated to align with the portion of the semester completed, as displayed on Table 1.

Table 1

Number of Weeks Into Semester When Assistantship is Terminated	Student Tuition & E&G Fee Obligation	Department Tuition & E&G Fee Obligation
Less than Four	100%	0%
Four through less than Eight	75%	25%
Eight through less than Twelve	50%	50%
Twelve through less than Sixteen	25%	75%
Sixteen or more (full semester)	0%	100%

Health Insurance

At the March 2001 meeting of the Board of Visitors, a health insurance program for graduate students on assistantship was approved as a part of the graduate student compensation package to enhance the university's competitiveness in recruiting highly qualified graduate students. The program was designed to help full-time graduate students receiving a full or partial assistantship, including graduate research assistants, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate assistants, offset a portion of the cost of health insurance premiums. In 2009-10, university management worked with representatives of the graduate student community to review and improve the overall mix and value of benefits provided through the health insurance program; these enhancements were approved by the Board and included in the program for 2010-11. For the 2018-19 academic year, the Board of Visitors approved a health insurance

subsidy rate of 88 percent for graduate assistants, matching the university's share of other employee health insurance programs.

In order to qualify for health insurance, full-time graduate students must have a 50 percent or greater appointment. Graduate students also have the option to decline coverage if they so choose. In 2019-20, the university provided 88 percent of the \$3,173 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,118 graduate students. The plan provided for a \$450 in-network annual deductible, \$5,750 per-person out-of-pocket maximum, \$25 co-pay for in-network doctors' visits, and an unlimited maximum benefit. Students can obtain optional dental benefits for an additional cost.

Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2020-21

The university proposes the following actions:

- Continuing the 2019-20 base stipend amount.
- Enhancing the total stipend by increasing the academic year Stipend Supplement of \$400 by \$58, resulting in a total academic year Stipend Supplement of \$458 to help mitigate university assigned costs.
- Continuing the university share of the graduate assistant health insurance coverage at 88 percent, based upon the university's current estimate the cost of graduate student insurance coverage.
- Continue the graduate tuition remission program.

RECOMMENDATION

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2020-21 be approved.

May 29, 2020

2020-21 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation
Effective August 10, 2020

Step	2020-21			Total Stipend					
	Components			Total Stipend					
	Monthly Base		AY Supplement	Monthly		9 Month		12 Month	
Step 1	\$ 1,473	- \$ 1,473	\$458	\$ 1,523	- \$ 1,523	\$ 13,707	- \$ 13,707	\$ 18,276	- \$ 18,276
Step 2	1,474	- 1,531	458	1,524	- 1,581	13,716	- 14,229	18,288	- 18,972
Step 3	1,532	- 1,587	458	1,582	- 1,637	14,238	- 14,733	18,984	- 19,644
Step 4	1,588	- 1,643	458	1,638	- 1,693	14,742	- 15,237	19,656	- 20,316
Step 5	1,645	- 1,699	458	1,695	- 1,749	15,255	- 15,741	20,340	- 20,988
Step 6	1,700	- 1,758	458	1,750	- 1,808	15,750	- 16,272	21,000	- 21,696
Step 7	1,759	- 1,813	458	1,809	- 1,863	16,281	- 16,767	21,708	- 22,356
Step 8	1,814	- 1,871	458	1,864	- 1,921	16,776	- 17,289	22,368	- 23,052
Step 9	1,873	- 1,926	458	1,923	- 1,976	17,307	- 17,784	23,076	- 23,712
Step 10	1,927	- 1,985	458	1,977	- 2,035	17,793	- 18,315	23,724	- 24,420
Step 11	1,986	- 2,038	458	2,036	- 2,088	18,324	- 18,792	24,432	- 25,056
Step 12	2,040	- 2,093	458	2,090	- 2,143	18,810	- 19,287	25,080	- 25,716
Step 13	2,096	- 2,153	458	2,146	- 2,203	19,314	- 19,827	25,752	- 26,436
Step 14	2,155	- 2,208	458	2,205	- 2,258	19,845	- 20,322	26,460	- 27,096
Step 15	2,210	- 2,266	458	2,260	- 2,316	20,340	- 20,844	27,120	- 27,792
Step 16	2,267	- 2,322	458	2,317	- 2,372	20,853	- 21,348	27,804	- 28,464
Step 17	2,323	- 2,378	458	2,373	- 2,428	21,357	- 21,852	28,476	- 29,136
Step 18	2,379	- 2,437	458	2,429	- 2,487	21,861	- 22,383	29,148	- 29,844
Step 19	2,438	- 2,493	458	2,488	- 2,543	22,392	- 22,887	29,856	- 30,516
Step 20	2,494	- 2,548	458	2,544	- 2,598	22,896	- 23,382	30,528	- 31,176
Step 21	2,550	- 2,606	458	2,600	- 2,656	23,400	- 23,904	31,200	- 31,872
Step 22	2,607	- 2,659	458	2,657	- 2,709	23,913	- 24,381	31,884	- 32,508
Step 23	2,660	- 2,717	458	2,710	- 2,767	24,390	- 24,903	32,520	- 33,204
Step 24	2,718	- 2,775	458	2,768	- 2,825	24,912	- 25,425	33,216	- 33,900
Step 25	2,776	- 2,831	458	2,826	- 2,881	25,434	- 25,929	33,912	- 34,572
Step 26	2,832	- 2,886	458	2,882	- 2,936	25,938	- 26,424	34,584	- 35,232
Step 27	2,887	- 2,947	458	2,937	- 2,997	26,433	- 26,973	35,244	- 35,964
Step 28	2,948	- 3,000	458	2,998	- 3,050	26,982	- 27,450	35,976	- 36,600
Step 29	3,002	- 3,057	458	3,052	- 3,107	27,468	- 27,963	36,624	- 37,284
Step 30	3,058	- 3,115	458	3,108	- 3,165	27,972	- 28,485	37,296	- 37,980
Step 31	3,116	- 3,169	458	3,166	- 3,219	28,494	- 28,971	37,992	- 38,628
Step 32	3,170	- 3,226	458	3,220	- 3,276	28,980	- 29,484	38,640	- 39,312
Step 33	3,228	- 3,283	458	3,278	- 3,333	29,502	- 29,997	39,336	- 39,996
Step 34	3,284	- 3,339	458	3,334	- 3,389	30,006	- 30,501	40,008	- 40,668
Step 35	3,340	- 3,395	458	3,390	- 3,445	30,510	- 31,005	40,680	- 41,340
Step 36	3,396	- 3,452	458	3,446	- 3,502	31,014	- 31,518	41,352	- 42,024
Step 37	3,453	- 3,508	458	3,503	- 3,558	31,527	- 32,022	42,036	- 42,696
Step 38	3,509	- 3,565	458	3,559	- 3,615	32,031	- 32,535	42,708	- 43,380
Step 39	3,566	- 3,623	458	3,616	- 3,673	32,544	- 33,057	43,392	- 44,076
Step 40	3,624	- 3,677	458	3,674	- 3,727	33,066	- 33,543	44,088	- 44,724
Step 41	3,678	- 3,737	458	3,728	- 3,787	33,552	- 34,083	44,736	- 45,444
Step 42	3,739	- 3,792	458	3,789	- 3,842	34,101	- 34,578	45,468	- 46,104
Step 43	3,794	- 3,848	458	3,844	- 3,898	34,596	- 35,082	46,128	- 46,776
Step 44	3,849	- 3,906	458	3,899	- 3,956	35,091	- 35,604	46,788	- 47,472
Step 45	3,907	- 3,961	458	3,957	- 4,011	35,613	- 36,099	47,484	- 48,132
Step 46	3,962	- 4,020	458	4,012	- 4,070	36,108	- 36,630	48,144	- 48,840
Step 47	4,022	- 4,074	458	4,072	- 4,124	36,648	- 37,116	48,864	- 49,488
Step 48	4,075	- 4,133	458	4,125	- 4,183	37,125	- 37,647	49,500	- 50,196
Step 49	4,134	- 4,188	458	4,184	- 4,238	37,656	- 38,142	50,208	- 50,856
Step 50	4,189	- 4,245	458	4,239	- 4,295	38,151	- 38,655	50,868	- 51,540