

2022-23 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

February 17, 2022

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, stipend supplement, 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 encompass the current 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 Services 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 25, 2022, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,262 per month, which falls within step 13 of the 2021-22 stipend scale.

Tuition Assistance

In the 1990s, 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 2021-22 the university provided 88 percent of the \$3,343 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,168 graduate students. The plan provided for a \$450 in-network annual deductible, \$6,250 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.

Current Events

Graduate assistants provide a valuable service to the university and contribute to the advancement of the university's strategic vision. Compensation market pressures are impacting many employee groups and living costs are subject to inflationary cost pressures. The university desires to ensure a competitive compensation package; to that end, the president has asked the Provost and Dean of the Graduate School to convene a task force to develop recommendations for providing competitive compensation for graduate assistants.

Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2022-23

The university proposes the following actions:

- Advancing the stipend scale for 2022-23 by implementing a 5.0 percent increase effective August 10, 2022.
- Maintaining the current 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.
- Continuing the graduate tuition remission program.

RECOMMENDATION

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2022-23 be approved.

April 4, 2022

2022-23 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation
Effective August 10, 2022

Step	2022-23			Total Stipend					
	Components		AY Supplement	Monthly		9 Month		12 Month	
	Monthly Base								
Step 1	\$ 1,628	- \$ 1,628	\$458	\$ 1,679	- \$ 1,679	\$ 15,111	- \$ 15,111	\$ 20,148	- \$ 20,148
Step 2	1,629	- 1,692	458	1,680	- 1,743	15,120	- 15,687	20,160	- 20,916
Step 3	1,693	- 1,754	458	1,744	- 1,805	15,696	- 16,245	20,928	- 21,660
Step 4	1,755	- 1,816	458	1,806	- 1,867	16,254	- 16,803	21,672	- 22,404
Step 5	1,818	- 1,877	458	1,869	- 1,928	16,821	- 17,352	22,428	- 23,136
Step 6	1,879	- 1,942	458	1,930	- 1,993	17,370	- 17,937	23,160	- 23,916
Step 7	1,943	- 2,003	458	1,994	- 2,054	17,946	- 18,486	23,928	- 24,648
Step 8	2,004	- 2,067	458	2,055	- 2,118	18,495	- 19,062	24,660	- 25,416
Step 9	2,069	- 2,128	458	2,120	- 2,179	19,080	- 19,611	25,440	- 26,148
Step 10	2,129	- 2,193	458	2,180	- 2,244	19,620	- 20,196	26,160	- 26,928
Step 11	2,194	- 2,251	458	2,245	- 2,302	20,205	- 20,718	26,940	- 27,624
Step 12	2,254	- 2,312	458	2,305	- 2,363	20,745	- 21,267	27,660	- 28,356
Step 13	2,315	- 2,378	458	2,366	- 2,429	21,294	- 21,861	28,392	- 29,148
Step 14	2,380	- 2,439	458	2,431	- 2,490	21,879	- 22,410	29,172	- 29,880
Step 15	2,441	- 2,503	458	2,492	- 2,554	22,428	- 22,986	29,904	- 30,648
Step 16	2,504	- 2,565	458	2,555	- 2,616	22,995	- 23,544	30,660	- 31,392
Step 17	2,566	- 2,626	458	2,617	- 2,676	23,553	- 24,084	31,404	- 32,112
Step 18	2,627	- 2,691	458	2,678	- 2,742	24,102	- 24,678	32,136	- 32,904
Step 19	2,692	- 2,753	458	2,743	- 2,804	24,687	- 25,236	32,916	- 33,648
Step 20	2,754	- 2,814	458	2,805	- 2,864	25,245	- 25,776	33,660	- 34,368
Step 21	2,816	- 2,878	458	2,867	- 2,928	25,803	- 26,352	34,404	- 35,136
Step 22	2,879	- 2,935	458	2,930	- 2,986	26,370	- 26,874	35,160	- 35,832
Step 23	2,937	- 2,999	458	2,988	- 3,050	26,892	- 27,450	35,856	- 36,600
Step 24	3,000	- 3,063	458	3,051	- 3,114	27,459	- 28,026	36,612	- 37,368
Step 25	3,064	- 3,125	458	3,115	- 3,176	28,035	- 28,584	37,380	- 38,112
Step 26	3,126	- 3,186	458	3,177	- 3,237	28,593	- 29,133	38,124	- 38,844
Step 27	3,187	- 3,253	458	3,238	- 3,304	29,142	- 29,736	38,856	- 39,648
Step 28	3,255	- 3,312	458	3,305	- 3,363	29,745	- 30,267	39,660	- 40,356
Step 29	3,314	- 3,374	458	3,365	- 3,425	30,285	- 30,825	40,380	- 41,100
Step 30	3,375	- 3,438	458	3,426	- 3,489	30,834	- 31,401	41,112	- 41,868
Step 31	3,439	- 3,498	458	3,490	- 3,549	31,410	- 31,941	41,880	- 42,588
Step 32	3,499	- 3,561	458	3,550	- 3,612	31,950	- 32,508	42,600	- 43,344
Step 33	3,563	- 3,624	458	3,614	- 3,675	32,526	- 33,075	43,368	- 44,100
Step 34	3,625	- 3,685	458	3,676	- 3,736	33,084	- 33,624	44,112	- 44,832
Step 35	3,687	- 3,747	458	3,738	- 3,798	33,642	- 34,182	44,856	- 45,576
Step 36	3,748	- 3,810	458	3,799	- 3,861	34,191	- 34,749	45,588	- 46,332
Step 37	3,811	- 3,872	458	3,862	- 3,923	34,758	- 35,307	46,344	- 47,076
Step 38	3,873	- 3,935	458	3,924	- 3,986	35,316	- 35,874	47,088	- 47,832
Step 39	3,936	- 3,999	458	3,987	- 4,050	35,883	- 36,450	47,844	- 48,600
Step 40	4,000	- 4,058	458	4,051	- 4,109	36,459	- 36,981	48,612	- 49,308
Step 41	4,059	- 4,124	458	4,110	- 4,175	36,990	- 37,575	49,320	- 50,100
Step 42	4,126	- 4,185	458	4,177	- 4,236	37,593	- 38,124	50,124	- 50,832
Step 43	4,187	- 4,247	458	4,238	- 4,298	38,142	- 38,682	50,856	- 51,576
Step 44	4,248	- 4,311	458	4,299	- 4,362	38,691	- 39,258	51,588	- 52,344
Step 45	4,312	- 4,372	458	4,363	- 4,423	39,267	- 39,807	52,356	- 53,076
Step 46	4,373	- 4,437	458	4,424	- 4,488	39,816	- 40,392	53,088	- 53,856
Step 47	4,439	- 4,496	458	4,490	- 4,547	40,410	- 40,923	53,880	- 54,564
Step 48	4,497	- 4,561	458	4,548	- 4,612	40,932	- 41,508	54,576	- 55,344
Step 49	4,562	- 4,622	458	4,613	- 4,673	41,517	- 42,057	55,356	- 56,076
Step 50	4,623	- 4,685	458	4,674	- 4,736	42,066	- 42,624	56,088	- 56,832