

## 2021-22 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

### FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

February 26, 2021

#### 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 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, 2021, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,169 per month, which falls within step 14 of the 2020-21 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

<b>Number of Weeks Into Semester When Assistantship is Terminated</b>	<b>Student Tuition &amp; E&amp;G Fee Obligation</b>	<b>Department Tuition &amp; E&amp;G Fee Obligation</b>
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 2020-21, the university provided 88 percent of the \$3,173 annual premium cost of the plan to 1,966 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.

### **Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2021-22**

The university proposes the following actions:

- Advancing the stipend scale for 2021-22 by implementing a 5.0 percent increase effective August 10, 2021, consistent with the state's approved employee compensation plan.
- 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.
- Continue the graduate tuition remission program.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2021-22 be approved.

March 22, 2021

**2021-22 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation**  
Effective August 10, 2021

		2021-22				
Components			Total Stipend			
Step	Monthly Base	AY Supplement	Monthly	9 Month	12 Month	
Step 1	\$ 1,548 - \$ 1,548	\$458	\$ 1,599 - \$ 1,599	\$ 14,391 - \$ 14,391	\$ 19,188 - \$ 19,188	
Step 2	1,549 - 1,609	458	1,600 - 1,660	14,400 - 14,940	19,200 - 19,920	
Step 3	1,610 - 1,668	458	1,661 - 1,719	14,949 - 15,471	19,932 - 20,628	
Step 4	1,669 - 1,727	458	1,720 - 1,778	15,480 - 16,002	20,640 - 21,336	
Step 5	1,729 - 1,786	458	1,780 - 1,836	16,020 - 16,524	21,360 - 22,032	
Step 6	1,787 - 1,848	458	1,838 - 1,898	16,542 - 17,082	22,056 - 22,776	
Step 7	1,849 - 1,905	458	1,899 - 1,956	17,091 - 17,604	22,788 - 23,472	
Step 8	1,906 - 1,966	458	1,957 - 2,017	17,613 - 18,153	23,484 - 24,204	
Step 9	1,968 - 2,024	458	2,019 - 2,075	18,171 - 18,675	24,228 - 24,900	
Step 10	2,025 - 2,086	458	2,076 - 2,137	18,684 - 19,233	24,912 - 25,644	
Step 11	2,087 - 2,142	458	2,138 - 2,192	19,242 - 19,728	25,656 - 26,304	
Step 12	2,144 - 2,199	458	2,195 - 2,250	19,755 - 20,250	26,340 - 27,000	
Step 13	2,202 - 2,262	458	2,253 - 2,313	20,277 - 20,817	27,036 - 27,756	
Step 14	2,264 - 2,320	458	2,315 - 2,371	20,835 - 21,339	27,780 - 28,452	
Step 15	2,322 - 2,381	458	2,373 - 2,432	21,357 - 21,888	28,476 - 29,184	
Step 16	2,382 - 2,440	458	2,433 - 2,491	21,897 - 22,419	29,196 - 29,892	
Step 17	2,441 - 2,499	458	2,492 - 2,549	22,428 - 22,941	29,904 - 30,588	
Step 18	2,500 - 2,560	458	2,550 - 2,611	22,950 - 23,499	30,600 - 31,332	
Step 19	2,562 - 2,619	458	2,612 - 2,670	23,508 - 24,030	31,344 - 32,040	
Step 20	2,620 - 2,677	458	2,671 - 2,728	24,039 - 24,552	32,052 - 32,736	
Step 21	2,679 - 2,738	458	2,730 - 2,789	24,570 - 25,101	32,760 - 33,468	
Step 22	2,739 - 2,794	458	2,790 - 2,844	25,110 - 25,596	33,480 - 34,128	
Step 23	2,795 - 2,854	458	2,846 - 2,905	25,614 - 26,145	34,152 - 34,860	
Step 24	2,856 - 2,915	458	2,906 - 2,966	26,154 - 26,694	34,872 - 35,592	
Step 25	2,916 - 2,974	458	2,967 - 3,025	26,703 - 27,225	35,604 - 36,300	
Step 26	2,975 - 3,032	458	3,026 - 3,083	27,234 - 27,747	36,312 - 36,996	
Step 27	3,033 - 3,096	458	3,084 - 3,147	27,756 - 28,323	37,008 - 37,764	
Step 28	3,097 - 3,152	458	3,148 - 3,203	28,332 - 28,827	37,776 - 38,436	
Step 29	3,154 - 3,211	458	3,205 - 3,262	28,845 - 29,358	38,460 - 39,144	
Step 30	3,213 - 3,272	458	3,263 - 3,323	29,367 - 29,907	39,156 - 39,876	
Step 31	3,273 - 3,329	458	3,324 - 3,380	29,916 - 30,420	39,888 - 40,560	
Step 32	3,330 - 3,389	458	3,381 - 3,440	30,429 - 30,960	40,572 - 41,280	
Step 33	3,391 - 3,449	458	3,442 - 3,500	30,978 - 31,500	41,304 - 42,000	
Step 34	3,450 - 3,508	458	3,501 - 3,558	31,509 - 32,022	42,012 - 42,696	
Step 35	3,509 - 3,566	458	3,560 - 3,617	32,040 - 32,553	42,720 - 43,404	
Step 36	3,567 - 3,626	458	3,618 - 3,677	32,562 - 33,093	43,416 - 44,124	
Step 37	3,627 - 3,685	458	3,678 - 3,736	33,102 - 33,624	44,136 - 44,832	
Step 38	3,686 - 3,745	458	3,737 - 3,796	33,633 - 34,164	44,844 - 45,552	
Step 39	3,746 - 3,806	458	3,797 - 3,857	34,173 - 34,713	45,564 - 46,284	
Step 40	3,807 - 3,862	458	3,858 - 3,913	34,722 - 35,217	46,296 - 46,956	
Step 41	3,864 - 3,925	458	3,914 - 3,976	35,226 - 35,784	46,968 - 47,712	
Step 42	3,928 - 3,983	458	3,978 - 4,034	35,802 - 36,306	47,736 - 48,408	
Step 43	3,985 - 4,042	458	4,036 - 4,093	36,324 - 36,837	48,432 - 49,116	
Step 44	4,043 - 4,103	458	4,094 - 4,154	36,846 - 37,386	49,128 - 49,848	
Step 45	4,104 - 4,161	458	4,155 - 4,212	37,395 - 37,908	49,860 - 50,544	
Step 46	4,162 - 4,223	458	4,213 - 4,274	37,917 - 38,466	50,556 - 51,288	
Step 47	4,225 - 4,279	458	4,276 - 4,330	38,484 - 38,970	51,312 - 51,960	
Step 48	4,280 - 4,341	458	4,331 - 4,392	38,979 - 39,528	51,972 - 52,704	
Step 49	4,342 - 4,399	458	4,393 - 4,450	39,537 - 40,050	52,716 - 53,400	
Step 50	4,400 - 4,459	458	4,451 - 4,510	40,059 - 40,590	53,412 - 54,120	