

2023-24 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

April 18, 2023

Background

Graduate students who work as graduate assistants while pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees provide valuable contributions 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 that the university 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

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 units 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 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 assistantship 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 Fall 2022, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,431 per month, which falls within step 14 of the 2022-23 stipend scale. This represents a 7.5 percent increase over the prior year.

Tuition Assistance

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. 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.

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 2022-23 the university provided 88 percent of the \$3,276 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,590 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

Because the university desires to ensure a competitive compensation package, the Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, at the behest of the President, convened a task force to develop proposals for improving graduate student compensation. In February 2023, this group released its *Report of the Graduate Assistantship Support Task Force* with eight recommendations designed to help graduate assistants meet the cost of living where they reside and complete their academic programs.

Based on this work, the university recommends the establishment of a new minimum stipend at Step 11 (\$2,420 per month) of the stipend schedule (the prior minimum was Step 1). Steps 1-10 will be reserved for stipend and fellowship combinations that result in total monthly support of at least the Step 11 minimum. Exceptions necessary to accommodate external funding agency requirements are subject to approval by the Dean of Graduate Education.

Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2023-24

The university proposes the following actions:

- Advancing the stipend scale for 2023-24 by implementing a 5.0 percent increase effective August 10, 2023, consistent with the statewide employee compensation program approved by the 2022 General Assembly.
 - Pending final action by the General Assembly, the Board authorizes the president to modify the increase for graduate assistant compensation to match the statewide employee compensation program.
- Maintaining the current academic year Stipend Supplement of \$458 to help mitigate university assigned costs.
- Establishment of a minimum stipend of Step 11 for assistantships, with steps 1-10 requiring the combination of a fellowship and stipend that results in a total of at least the minimum stipend level.
- 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 2023-24 be approved.

Pending final action by the General Assembly, the Board authorizes the president to modify the increase for graduate assistant compensation to match the statewide employee compensation program.

June 6, 2023

Attachment

2023-24 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation
Effective August 10, 2023

		2023-24						
		Components		Total Stipend				
Step		Monthly Base	AY Supplement	Monthly	9 Month	12 Month		
Step 1	*	\$ 1,712 - \$ 1,712	\$458	\$ 1,763 - \$ 1,763	\$ 15,867 - \$ 15,867	\$ 21,156 - \$ 21,156		
Step 2	*	1,713 - 1,779	458	1,764 - 1,830	15,876 - 16,470	21,168 - 21,960		
Step 3	*	1,780 - 1,844	458	1,831 - 1,895	16,479 - 17,055	21,972 - 22,740		
Step 4	*	1,845 - 1,909	458	1,896 - 1,960	17,064 - 17,640	22,752 - 23,520		
Step 5	*	1,912 - 1,974	458	1,962 - 2,024	17,658 - 18,216	23,544 - 24,288		
Step 6	*	1,976 - 2,042	458	2,027 - 2,093	18,243 - 18,837	24,324 - 25,116		
Step 7	*	2,043 - 2,106	458	2,094 - 2,157	18,846 - 19,413	25,128 - 25,884		
Step 8	*	2,107 - 2,173	458	2,158 - 2,224	19,422 - 20,016	25,896 - 26,688		
Step 9	*	2,175 - 2,237	458	2,226 - 2,288	20,034 - 20,592	26,712 - 27,456		
Step 10	*	2,238 - 2,305	458	2,289 - 2,356	20,601 - 21,204	27,468 - 28,272		
Step 11	*	2,306 - 2,366	458	2,357 - 2,417	21,213 - 21,753	28,284 - 29,004		
Step 12	- Minimum	2,369 - 2,430	458	2,420 - 2,481	21,780 - 22,329	29,040 - 29,772		
Step 13		2,433 - 2,500	458	2,484 - 2,550	22,356 - 22,950	29,808 - 30,600		
Step 14		2,502 - 2,564	458	2,553 - 2,615	22,977 - 23,535	30,636 - 31,380		
Step 15		2,566 - 2,631	458	2,617 - 2,682	23,553 - 24,138	31,404 - 32,184		
Step 16		2,632 - 2,696	458	2,683 - 2,747	24,147 - 24,723	32,196 - 32,964		
Step 17		2,697 - 2,759	458	2,748 - 2,810	24,732 - 25,290	32,976 - 33,720		
Step 18		2,761 - 2,828	458	2,812 - 2,879	25,308 - 25,911	33,744 - 34,548		
Step 19		2,829 - 2,893	458	2,880 - 2,944	25,920 - 26,496	34,560 - 35,328		
Step 20		2,894 - 2,956	458	2,945 - 3,007	26,505 - 27,063	35,340 - 36,084		
Step 21		2,959 - 3,024	458	3,010 - 3,074	27,090 - 27,666	36,120 - 36,888		
Step 22		3,026 - 3,084	458	3,077 - 3,135	27,693 - 28,215	36,924 - 37,620		
Step 23		3,087 - 3,152	458	3,137 - 3,203	28,233 - 28,827	37,644 - 38,436		
Step 24		3,153 - 3,219	458	3,204 - 3,270	28,836 - 29,430	38,448 - 39,240		
Step 25		3,220 - 3,284	458	3,271 - 3,335	29,439 - 30,015	39,252 - 40,020		
Step 26		3,285 - 3,348	458	3,336 - 3,399	30,024 - 30,591	40,032 - 40,788		
Step 27		3,349 - 3,418	458	3,400 - 3,469	30,600 - 31,221	40,800 - 41,628		
Step 28		3,419 - 3,480	458	3,470 - 3,531	31,230 - 31,779	41,640 - 42,372		
Step 29		3,482 - 3,545	458	3,533 - 3,596	31,797 - 32,364	42,396 - 43,152		
Step 30		3,546 - 3,613	458	3,597 - 3,663	32,373 - 32,967	43,164 - 43,956		
Step 31		3,614 - 3,676	458	3,665 - 3,726	32,985 - 33,534	43,980 - 44,712		
Step 32		3,677 - 3,742	458	3,728 - 3,793	33,552 - 34,137	44,736 - 45,516		
Step 33		3,744 - 3,808	458	3,795 - 3,859	34,155 - 34,731	45,540 - 46,308		
Step 34		3,809 - 3,872	458	3,860 - 3,923	34,740 - 35,307	46,320 - 47,076		
Step 35		3,874 - 3,937	458	3,925 - 3,988	35,325 - 35,892	47,100 - 47,856		
Step 36		3,938 - 4,003	458	3,989 - 4,054	35,901 - 36,486	47,868 - 48,648		
Step 37		4,004 - 4,068	458	4,055 - 4,119	36,495 - 37,071	48,660 - 49,428		
Step 38		4,069 - 4,134	458	4,120 - 4,185	37,080 - 37,665	49,440 - 50,220		
Step 39		4,135 - 4,202	458	4,186 - 4,253	37,674 - 38,277	50,232 - 51,036		
Step 40		4,203 - 4,264	458	4,254 - 4,314	38,286 - 38,826	51,048 - 51,768		
Step 41		4,265 - 4,333	458	4,316 - 4,384	38,844 - 39,456	51,792 - 52,608		
Step 42		4,335 - 4,397	458	4,386 - 4,448	39,474 - 40,032	52,632 - 53,376		
Step 43		4,399 - 4,462	458	4,450 - 4,513	40,050 - 40,617	53,400 - 54,156		
Step 44		4,463 - 4,529	458	4,514 - 4,580	40,626 - 41,220	54,168 - 54,960		
Step 45		4,530 - 4,593	458	4,581 - 4,644	41,229 - 41,796	54,972 - 55,728		
Step 46		4,594 - 4,662	458	4,645 - 4,712	41,805 - 42,408	55,740 - 56,544		
Step 47		4,664 - 4,723	458	4,715 - 4,774	42,435 - 42,966	56,580 - 57,288		
Step 48		4,725 - 4,792	458	4,775 - 4,843	42,975 - 43,587	57,300 - 58,116		
Step 49		4,793 - 4,856	458	4,844 - 4,907	43,596 - 44,163	58,128 - 58,884		
Step 50		4,857 - 4,922	458	4,908 - 4,973	44,172 - 44,757	58,896 - 59,676		

*Steps 1-10 require supplemental fellowship. Total stipend and fellowship must meet minimum of Step 11. Exceptions necessary to accommodate external funding agency requirements are subject to approval by the Dean of Graduate Education.

APPROVAL OF 2023-24 COMPENSATION FOR GRADUATE ASSTANTS

KEN MILLER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR
FINANCE AND UNIVERSITY TREASURER

JUNE 6, 2023

BACKGROUND

Graduate Assistants provide valuable services to the university, including teaching and support of scholarly and research activities.

Successful recruitment of high-quality graduate students requires the university to offer competitive compensation packages.

A full assistantship equals 20 hours of work per week.

Components of Compensation Package

- Stipend (including a Stipend Supplement)
- Tuition assistance
- Health insurance benefit

STIPEND

1. Base stipend scale provides a range of stipend amounts reflective of appointment and levels of responsibility.
2. \$458 academic year stipend supplement helps offset university costs

As of January 2023, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,431 per month.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

Tuition Assistance includes remission of tuition, mandatory E&G fees, and non-executive graduate program fees.

Funded through sources appropriate to the nature of the work

1. General Fund appropriation for graduate assistance
2. Tuition remission in the Educational and General budget
3. Tuition payments planned in the budgets of externally sponsored grants and contracts
4. Private funds

HEALTH INSURANCE

- To qualify, full-time graduate students must have a 50 percent or greater assistantship appointment.
- In 2022-23, the university provided 88 percent of the \$3,276 annual premium cost. Subsidy matches the university's share of other employee health insurance programs.
- Graduate students may decline coverage.

9-MONTH COMPENSATION FY23

2022-23

	In-State	Out-of-State
<u>University Compensation Package</u>		
Stipend, 9-month (average, includes supplement)	\$21,879	\$21,879
Tuition Remission (includes E&G fees)	14,706	29,452
Program Fee Remission (depends on program)	0 - 2,000	0 - 2,000
Immigration Services Fee Remission	0	0 - 550
Health Insurance Subsidy (88%)	2,882	2,882
Total University	\$39,467 - \$41,467	\$54,213 - \$56,763

Student Costs

Comprehensive Fee	\$2,377	\$2,377
Commonwealth Capital & Equipment Fee	0	604
Health Insurance (12%)	393	393
Total Student	\$2,770	\$3,374

CURRENT EVENTS

- Markets are moving, competitive compensation is important
- The president asked the Provost and Dean of the Graduate School to convene a task force to develop recommendations for improving graduate assistantship compensation
- Based on this work, the university recommends the establishment of a new minimum stipend at \$2,420 per month
- This addresses a top recommendation from the task force
- Cost of moving 730 assistantships to new minimum is \$1.228M (of which \$882K is in E&G)

KEY POINTS

Stipend

- 5.0 percent stipend increase effective August 10, 2023
 - Average will move up by more due to raising the floor
- Pending final action by the General Assembly, the Board authorizes the president to modify the increase for graduate assistant compensation to match the statewide employee compensation program
- Maintain academic year stipend supplement of \$458
- Establish minimum stipend of \$2,420

Tuition Remission - continue program

Health Insurance - continue 88% subsidy

APPROVAL OF 2023-24 COMPENSATION FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

RECOMMENDATION

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2023-24 be approved.

Pending final action by the General Assembly, the Board authorizes the president to modify the increase for graduate assistant compensation to match the statewide employee compensation program.

June 6, 2023