**Frequently Asked Questions** Updated 08/31/2017

**Graduate Assistant Rate Based Stipend Method**

Background:

UW-Madison has implemented changes in the administrative policy by which graduate assistantship stipends are set in order to remain competitive in attracting the best possible graduate students across all disciplines and to ensure that graduate students are students first and employees second. The primary change consists of using adjustments to the rate of pay, rather than to the percentage appointment, to set the stipend amount for research assistants (RAs). This is consistent with other top research universities and will make it easier for prospective students to compare an offer from UW-Madison with an offer from another institution.

Where do I find the established graduate student assistantship rates?

* The campus spreadsheet listing all approved department program rates is available at:

<https://hr.cals.wisc.edu/recruiting-appointment-info/student-employment/>

The graduate assistant rate based stipend method spreadsheet indicates a minimum rate that has been approved by the Graduate School. What does this mean?

* The minimum rate is the minimum stipend rate a graduate student must receive based on the graduate program in which they are enrolled. The minimum is set at an assumed maximum appointment level of 50% time, which is the maximum appointment level a Research Assistant may hold.

Is there a maximum stipend rate, and if so, what is driving that number?

* No, there is not a maximum stipend rate. However, departments need to set rates that are considered reasonable based on market levels and which have been approved through your School/College and the Graduate School. For example, reasonable compensation under NIH require that the stipend, tuition remission, and fringe benefits costs not exceed the 0 year postdoctoral fellow/trainee stipend plus associated fringe costs.

See NIH notice NOT-OD-17-003: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-17-003.html>

What is a tiered rate structure and where do I find information regarding department programs which have approved tiered rates?

* A tiered rate structure establishes multiple minimum rates within a department program. Once established, graduate students meeting the criteria defined for each rate level, must receive (at a minimum) that rate.
* Information is included in the campus spreadsheet for department programs with approved tiered rate structures.

We did not establish a tiered rate? Can we do so at this time and how would that occur?

* Yes – please contact Cheryl Bowes in CALS Human Resources ([cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu](mailto:cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu) 890-3173) to discuss further.

How frequently can graduate programs adjust their stipend rates? What is the process for requesting a change?

* Typically, rates are set in the late Fall/early Spring for the next annual cycle.
* To discuss options for adjusting stipend rates, please contact Cheryl Bowes in CALS Human Resources ([cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu](mailto:cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu) 890-3173) to discuss further.
* Once your School/College has approved the tiered rate, they will send this information to the Graduate School, through the appropriate approval channels.
* The Graduate School will notify the School/College when the tiered rates are approved. The School/College is responsible for notifying their departments of the approved stipend rates.
* The Graduate School will update the campus spreadsheet with the new stipend rates.
* If tiered rates are introduced later in the semester, they can’t be applied retroactively.

My laboratory supports graduate students who are enrolled in a variety of graduate programs. How do I know what rate must be provided to each student?

* First, refer to the campus spreadsheet listing all approved department program rates which is available at: <https://hr.cals.wisc.edu/recruiting-appointment-info/student-employment/>
* Your department program sets the minimum rate for a graduate student enrolled in your department program.
* If the student is from another program and the stipend rate is less than your department program rate, the campus policy requires that the student receive their program rate.

For a research assistant, must I provide a 50% time appointment?

* No, it is not required that you appoint a research assistant at 50%. However, you should refer to the letter of guarantee from the program to determine the appropriate compensation level for the student.

A graduate student’s program rate is higher than the program rate of my department program. May the student receive a less than 50% time appointment to reduce their stipend to equal that of a 50% time student in our department program?

* No, this does not meet the intent of the campus graduate assistant rate based method. However, you may seek support from the student’s program department to assist in covering the cost above your department program rate.
* Note: in such cases, one assistantship is established. Shared funding is handled within the HRS system under the one appointment; do not establish multiple appointments in these cases.

Are there conditions where rates other than program rates are established?

* Yes. Programs which cross multiple schools/colleges, in certain instances, may set a specific rate, regardless of the individual student’s program rate. For example,
  + Integrated Program in Biochemistry (IPIB)
  + Microbiology Doctoral Training Program (MDTP)
  + Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Nutritional Sciences (IGPNS)

When a student is receiving a fellowship or traineeship, which allows for supplementation, how is the allowable supplementation level calculated?

* Policy: a graduate student may not receive more than the 100% equivalent of their department program stipend rate. Please refer to the example below:

Example: 50% department program rate = $22,081

100% department program rate = $44,182 ($22,081 x 2)

Determine amount of fellowship or traineeship.

Calculation: $44,182 100% equivalent department program stipend rate

-32,000 amount of fellowship or traineeship

$12,182 maximum amount of supplementation the graduate student may receive

* Supplementation, if allowable under the terms of the fellowship or traineeship, may not exceed the difference between the 100% equivalent department program stipend rate and the fellowship or traineeship. This amount is a maximum supplementation level allowed, not a mandatory level. Many departments provide research appointments for the purpose of equity.
* For more information on Supplementation and Concurrent Appointment information go to: <https://kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/page.php?id=33321>.

I have additional funding and wish to pay my graduate student more than the approved graduate assistant rate. What are my options?

* If providing an additional work opportunity to a graduate student via another form of assistantship (e.g., PA, TA) or student hourly employment, note that these are not simply supplementations to increase compensation for the graduate student – these are employment arrangements. As such, each must carry with it a defined scope of work, expectations, work hours, and associated reporting requirements. If you have questions about such arrangements, please contact Cheryl Bowes in CALS Human Resources ([cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu](mailto:cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu) 890-3173).
* The maximum total appointment for international students for any single graduate assistant appointment or combination of graduate assistant appointments during the academic calendar will be 50% per federal immigration guidelines.

Are there specific policies regarding grant funding, which we should be aware of, when considering supplementing a Research Assistant with additional employment?

* Yes, in regard to supplementation of an RA appointment with another employment instance (e.g., PA, TA, SH) – the supplementary appointment cannot be paid on the same federal award as the RAship.

Who is responsible for assuring that a graduate student receives the correct rate based on the program they are enrolled in and the department they are employed in?

* Departments in which graduate students are appointed, have primary responsibility for assuring students are appropriately appointed and the stipend rate provided follows the campus graduate assistant rate based stipend method. Cheryl Bowes in CALS Human Resources ([cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu](mailto:cheryl.bowes@wisc.edu) 890-3173) is available to assist with questions, review of appointment letters, and entry of appointments.
* Divisions are also responsible for monitoring graduate assistant stipend rates to ensure systematic implementation of graduate assistant stipend payments.

Additional links to helpful information:

* Graduate School, Changes to Graduate Assistantship Appointment Process:

<https://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/assistantship-process-change/>

* Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures, Maximum Levels of Appointments: <https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/?policy=maximumlevelsofappointments>
* University of Wisconsin-Madison Maximum Levels of Graduate Assistantship Appointments Policy: <https://kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/page.php?id=33322>
* Research and Graduate Education Knowledgebase, University of Wisconsin-Madison Policy for Supplementation and Concurrent Appointments for Graduate Students Holding Predoctoral Fellowships or Traineeships: <https://kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/page.php?id=33321>
* Reference document outlining: [Maximum Appointment Levels for Graduate Assistants by Appointment Type](https://kb.wisc.edu/images/group156/33322/MaximumAppointmentLevelsbyAppointmentType.pdf)