

2024-25 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

May 15, 2024

Background

Graduate students who serve 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 to 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 university took several actions beginning in the Fall 2023 to put Virginia Tech in a competitive position relative to peers. The result of those actions was the adoption of a graduate stipend scale with 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 an effort to increase minimum stipend levels, starting in 2023-24, the university restricted steps 1-11 to be used only in instances where a student was receiving a fellowship that in combination with a graduate stipend in that range would result in a total of at least the minimum stipend level of Step 12.

Graduate Stipend Supplement

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 Spring 2024, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,713 per month, which falls within step 15 of the 2023-24 stipend scale. This represents a 11.6 percent increase over the prior year.

Tuition Assistance

The tuition remission program for graduate students on assistantship includes the remission of tuition, mandatory Educational and General (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 university's E&G 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

In 2001-02, the university implemented a health insurance program for graduate students on assistantship as a part of the Board-approved 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 other graduate assistants, offset a portion of the cost of health insurance premiums. The university has worked with graduate student representatives over time to improve the overall mix and value of benefits provided through the health insurance program, including action by the Board of Visitors in 2018-19 to approve a health insurance subsidy rate of 88 percent for graduate assistants, matching the university's share of employee health insurance programs.

In order to qualify for the health insurance subsidy, full-time graduate students must have a 50 percent or greater appointment. Graduate students also have the option to decline coverage if they choose. In 2023-24 the university provided 88 percent of the \$3,573 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,859 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.

Recent 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 board approved raising the minimum stipend from Step 1 to Step 12 for 2023-24. Lower steps were reserved for stipend and fellowship combinations that resulted in total monthly support of at least the new minimum.

For 2024-25 the university recommends raising the minimum stipend from Step 12 to Step 14, with steps 1-13 reserved for stipend and fellowship combinations that result in total monthly support of at least the new minimum.

Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2024-25

The university proposes the following actions:

- Establishment of a minimum stipend of Step 14 for assistantships, with steps 1-13 requiring the combination of a fellowship and stipend that results in total support of at least the minimum stipend level.
- Advancing the stipend scale for 2024-25 by implementing a 3.0 percent increase effective August 10, 2024, consistent with the statewide employee compensation program.
- 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 2024-25 be approved.

June 11, 2024

2024-25 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation (Revised)
Effective August 10, 2024

2024-25 Revised										
Components				Total Stipend						
Step	Monthly Base		AY Supplement	Monthly		9 Month Equivalent		12 Month Equivalent		
Step 1 *	\$ 1,801	- \$ 1,801	\$ 458	\$ 1,852	- \$ 1,852	\$ 16,668	- \$ 16,668	\$ 22,224	- \$ 22,224	
Step 2 *	1,802	- 1,872	458	1,853	- 1,923	16,677	- 17,307	22,236	- 23,076	
Step 3 *	1,873	- 1,940	458	1,924	- 1,991	17,316	- 17,919	23,088	- 23,892	
Step 4 *	1,941	- 2,008	458	1,992	- 2,059	17,928	- 18,531	23,904	- 24,708	
Step 5 *	2,010	- 2,075	458	2,061	- 2,126	18,549	- 19,134	24,732	- 25,512	
Step 6 *	2,079	- 2,148	458	2,130	- 2,199	19,170	- 19,791	25,560	- 26,388	
Step 7 *	2,149	- 2,215	458	2,200	- 2,266	19,800	- 20,394	26,400	- 27,192	
Step 8 *	2,216	- 2,285	458	2,267	- 2,336	20,403	- 21,024	27,204	- 28,032	
Step 9 *	2,288	- 2,353	458	2,339	- 2,404	21,051	- 21,636	28,068	- 28,848	
Step 10 *	2,354	- 2,424	458	2,405	- 2,475	21,645	- 22,275	28,860	- 29,700	
Step 11 *	2,425	- 2,488	458	2,476	- 2,539	22,284	- 22,851	29,712	- 30,468	
Step 12 *	2,491	- 2,556	458	2,542	- 2,607	22,878	- 23,463	30,504	- 31,284	
Step 13 *	2,559	- 2,628	458	2,610	- 2,679	23,490	- 24,111	31,320	- 32,148	
Step 14 - Minimum	2,631	- 2,696	458	2,682	- 2,747	24,138	- 24,723	32,184	- 32,964	
Step 15	2,698	- 2,767	458	2,749	- 2,818	24,741	- 25,362	32,988	- 33,816	
Step 16	2,768	- 2,835	458	2,819	- 2,886	25,371	- 25,974	33,828	- 34,632	
Step 17	2,836	- 2,901	458	2,887	- 2,952	25,983	- 26,568	34,644	- 35,424	
Step 18	2,903	- 2,974	458	2,954	- 3,025	26,586	- 27,225	35,448	- 36,300	
Step 19	2,975	- 3,042	458	3,026	- 3,093	27,234	- 27,837	36,312	- 37,116	
Step 20	3,043	- 3,108	458	3,094	- 3,159	27,846	- 28,431	37,128	- 37,908	
Step 21	3,111	- 3,178	458	3,162	- 3,229	28,458	- 29,061	37,944	- 38,748	
Step 22	3,182	- 3,243	458	3,233	- 3,294	29,097	- 29,646	38,796	- 39,528	
Step 23	3,245	- 3,314	458	3,296	- 3,365	29,664	- 30,285	39,552	- 40,380	
Step 24	3,315	- 3,384	458	3,366	- 3,435	30,294	- 30,915	40,392	- 41,220	
Step 25	3,385	- 3,453	458	3,436	- 3,504	30,924	- 31,536	41,232	- 42,048	
Step 26	3,454	- 3,520	458	3,505	- 3,571	31,545	- 32,139	42,060	- 42,852	
Step 27	3,521	- 3,593	458	3,572	- 3,644	32,148	- 32,796	42,864	- 43,728	
Step 28	3,594	- 3,659	458	3,645	- 3,710	32,805	- 33,390	43,740	- 44,520	
Step 29	3,661	- 3,727	458	3,712	- 3,778	33,408	- 34,002	44,544	- 45,336	
Step 30	3,728	- 3,797	458	3,779	- 3,848	34,011	- 34,632	45,348	- 46,176	
Step 31	3,799	- 3,864	458	3,850	- 3,915	34,650	- 35,235	46,200	- 46,980	
Step 32	3,866	- 3,934	458	3,917	- 3,985	35,253	- 35,865	47,004	- 47,820	
Step 33	3,936	- 4,003	458	3,987	- 4,054	35,883	- 36,486	47,844	- 48,648	
Step 34	4,004	- 4,070	458	4,055	- 4,121	36,495	- 37,089	48,660	- 49,452	
Step 35	4,073	- 4,139	458	4,124	- 4,190	37,116	- 37,710	49,488	- 50,280	
Step 36	4,140	- 4,208	458	4,191	- 4,259	37,719	- 38,331	50,292	- 51,108	
Step 37	4,209	- 4,276	458	4,260	- 4,327	38,340	- 38,943	51,120	- 51,924	
Step 38	4,277	- 4,346	458	4,328	- 4,397	38,952	- 39,573	51,936	- 52,764	
Step 39	4,347	- 4,417	458	4,398	- 4,468	39,582	- 40,212	52,776	- 53,616	
Step 40	4,418	- 4,481	458	4,469	- 4,532	40,221	- 40,788	53,628	- 54,384	
Step 41	4,483	- 4,555	458	4,534	- 4,606	40,806	- 41,454	54,408	- 55,272	
Step 42	4,557	- 4,622	458	4,608	- 4,673	41,472	- 42,057	55,296	- 56,076	
Step 43	4,624	- 4,690	458	4,675	- 4,741	42,075	- 42,669	56,100	- 56,892	
Step 44	4,691	- 4,761	458	4,742	- 4,812	42,678	- 43,308	56,904	- 57,744	
Step 45	4,762	- 4,828	458	4,813	- 4,879	43,317	- 43,911	57,756	- 58,548	
Step 46	4,829	- 4,899	458	4,880	- 4,950	43,920	- 44,550	58,560	- 59,400	
Step 47	4,902	- 4,964	458	4,953	- 5,015	44,577	- 45,135	59,436	- 60,180	
Step 48	4,966	- 5,037	458	5,017	- 5,088	45,153	- 45,792	60,204	- 61,056	
Step 49	5,038	- 5,104	458	5,089	- 5,155	45,801	- 46,395	61,068	- 61,860	
Step 50	5,105	- 5,173	458	5,156	- 5,224	46,404	- 47,016	61,872	- 62,688	

* Steps 1-13 require supplemental fellowship. Total stipend and fellowship must meet minimum of Step 14. Exceptions necessary to accommodate external funding agency requirements are subject to approval by the Dean of Graduate Education.