

**GRADUATE SCHOOL
PREEMINENCE AWARDS PROGRAM GUIDELINES**
Effective Fall 2019

Graduate School Preeminence Award (GSPA) Policy Summary

The purpose of the Graduate School Preeminence Award (GPSA) program is to help academic units offer highly competitive research/teaching assistantship stipends to their most attractive PhD applicants based on criteria the unit selects. The GSPA structure is a collaboration between academic programs and the Graduate School.

The base for each GSPA is \$31,000 annually for 4 years. The Graduate School will provide an additional \$2,000 - \$5,000 to each GSPA based on a dollar for dollar match between the Graduate School and the academic unit within that supplemental range. For the GSPA overall, the Graduate School provides \$33,000 to \$36,000 in funding, thus, the total award amount per student is \$35,000 - \$41,000. Importantly, all GSPAs should be for research or teaching assistantships at the .50 FTE level.

Though the preference is for 4-year awards, GSPAs can be offered for 5-years. The base for each 5-year GSPA is \$25,000 per year. The Graduate School will provide a dollar for dollar match of \$2,000 - \$5,000 for the full amount of \$27,000 - \$30,000 annually. For each 5-year GSPA, academic programs must provide a matching amount of \$2,000 - \$5,000 for total GSPA stipends of \$29,000 to \$35,000 over the five-year period.

Please note: If GSPAs are divided, designated students should receive full GSPA stipend amounts for individual award. Split GSPAs must show total stipend amounts of \$36,000 - \$42,000 per student for four-year awards and \$30,000 - \$36,000 for five-year awards. Colleges should submit their proposed guidelines to the Graduate School for approval on how split GSPAs will be administered. Once approved these guidelines should be distributed to the departments.

Basic Graduate School Funding Awards

Instead of GSPAs, academic units have the option of offering the \$31,000 base amount for 4 years. Those awards will be termed Graduate School Funding Awards (GSFAs). GSFAs can be offered as 5-year \$25,000 assistantship stipends when preferred and the awards should be assistantship appointments should at the .50 FTE level. Additionally, full GSFAs can be divided into fifths \$6,200 or sixths \$5,167 only as assistantship top-ups for entering PhD students for the 4-year awards. 5-year awards can be split by fifths only for \$5,000. Please Note: Full GSFAs can be **no less** than \$31,000 for 4 years or \$25,000 for 5 years. Academic units can supplement GSFAs with additional funds if desired, but those funds cannot emanate from the Graduate School.

External Funding Awards

Students with **full** GSPA or GSFA funding from the Graduate School who win large external fellowship awards such as the NSF-GRFP, will receive up to \$6,000 top-up funding to augment their external stipends during their external funded fellowship term. They can defer their GSPA during the external funding period and then receive up to two years of GSPA funding. Those winning smaller external fellowships may defer GSPAs and receive top-ups to maintain their stipends at the GSPA level. GSPA awardees on training grants will receive top-ups to maintain their GSPA stipend levels. The maximum award period is 5.5 years.

Outside Employment and Paid Internships

Students with full GSPA or GSFA funding **should not** be engaged in outside paid employment/internships or activities during the time-period they are supposed to be carrying out responsibilities related to their research/teaching assistantships. Doing so will subject individuals to the loss of the GSPA/GSFA funding.

Number of Awards: Calculation Criteria

Though the Graduate School provides \$33,000 - \$36,000 toward each GSPA, the actual number of awards are based on \$31,000 annual 4-year increments. The Graduate School provides the additional \$2,000 - \$5,000 for each award designated GSPA. The number of awards per college will be calculated on the 5-year numerical average of graduates from PhD programs with enrollments of at least 30. The base number of awards generated will range from 1 to 8; see Table 1. For example, an academic unit that graduated an average of 9 PhD recipients over the 5-year period will generate 2 awards for its respective college.

Table 1. Allocation Structure

5-Yr Average Graduation Rate	No. of Full Annual Awards @ \$31K
4 to 6	1
7 to 10	2
11 to 15	3
16 to 20	4
21 to 26	5
27 to 32	6
33 to 39	7
>39	8

Generating Additional Awards for GSPA and GSFA

Additional awards can be generated based upon two primary outcomes:

- 1) A graduation rate of 75% or more and/or
- 2) An overall graduation rate of at least 67% with the percentage of underrepresented minority students enrolled in the scale stated below based on academic discipline.
 - Math and Physical Science: At least 9%
 - Life Sciences and Engineering: At least 12%
 - Social Sciences and Humanities: At least 18%
 - Masters of Fine Arts: At least 24%

Academic units can meet the above two criteria to generate the following additional GSPA or GSFA allocations based on the following enrollment scale:

- Enrollment between 30 and 99 = 1
- Enrollment between 100 and 199 = 2
- Enrollment of 200 or greater = 3.

For example, an academic unit produced the following: (a) 40 enrolled PhD students; (b) a 5-year graduation average of 9; (c) a graduate rate of 75%; (d) an underrepresented minority enrollment percentage meeting the threshold.

Combining (a) and (b), the unit generated 2 GSPAs. Under (c) an extra GSPA was generated and still another under (d), thus resulting in a total allocation of 4 GSPA awards generated by that particular unit.

Allocation of Awards to Academic Units

Distribution of awards to departments or programs is at the discretion of college deans. Allocations are based on fixed dollar amounts and not cumulative pay periods. Colleges and academic programs will determine how awards are assigned. Raises, fringe benefits, and health insurance are covered by the colleges and academic programs.

Eligibility and Requirements

Awards can be offered only to new, incoming PhD and MFA (GSFA only) students. Continued funding for all awards will be contingent upon recipients maintaining good academic standing. Colleges can offer awards to students who have graduated with a master's degree from one of their departments and are newly admitted to the PhD program. Importantly, those students must officially apply and must be admitted to the PhD program as opposed to merely transitioning from master's program into PhD programs. Colleges will provide tuition waivers and GatorGradCare for students receiving the awards.

Graduate School Tracking Program

The list of new awardees must be entered into the Graduate School Tracking Program **no later than the first day of class**. Funds will not be released if recipients are not entered in the GSTP. Once classes have begun, students cannot be added to the list of GSPA/GSFA recipients. Funds not used due to withdrawal, absence or graduation will be returned to the Graduate School account.

Deferments

Deferments may be granted for internships, other awards, or medical withdrawals. Awards will be extended by one term for each term deferred. Summer deferments must be for Summer C only to extend funding. A maximum deferment

period is one year in total. Deferments for medical withdrawals will not be given for more than two consecutive terms because students must re-apply for admission to their programs.

Graduate Assistantships

All GSPA and GSFA awardees should be appointed to a 12-month 0.5 FTE graduate research or teaching assistantship. The purpose is to ensure awardees are fully engaged in their academic programs.

Letter of Offer of Admission to Academic Program

The Letter of Offer of Admission to academic programs must follow the template located at the following website: <https://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/hiring-center/preparing-an-offer/appointment-letter-library/> Letters should include the name of the award (GSPA or GSFA), the amount of the annual stipend, the duration of the award, the specific assignment sequence (which years will be teaching and/or research) if any, and other pertinent information regarding the degree program. For students receiving GSPA or GSFA top-ups to initial stipends, those awards should also be specified in the offer letters. **Offer letters for GSPA and GSFA awards must be approved by the Graduate School before sending to perspective students.**

Letter of Appointment for Employment as a Graduate Assistant in the Payroll System

Awardees should be appointed as graduate research or teaching assistants. For appointments, please use the template at <https://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/hiring-center/preparing-an-offer/appointment-letter-library/> Please clearly specify the nature of the research or teaching assignments, and any fees the students are expected to pay. Awardees appointed on assistantships should be paid on a biweekly cycle and appointed at 0.5 FTE.

Enrollment Regulations

Self-funded (off book) courses are not eligible for tuition waivers and must be paid by the student or department. Students receiving GSPA or GSFA's must maintain full-time registration as required by the appointment. Please see details on the Graduate School website: <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#registration>

Managing Top-ups for GSFA Awards

Two alternative approaches are available if the GSFA funding is divided into top-ups.

Appointing GSFA in the Payroll System

The preferred approach is to augment the graduate assistant appointment stipend using the payroll distribution system.

A second choice may be more suitable in particular circumstances, e.g., using the MOU form. Contact the Graduate School for questions. If this option is chosen, graduate students must be appointed as a research, graduate, or teaching assistant in addition to the top-up awards.

For awardees appointed using the MOU form, no additional work requirement can be assigned for the top-up. Please be aware this option has tax as well as federal financial aid implications for the student. The MOU form can be found at the following website: <https://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/fellowshipmemo.pdf>

Fellowship Appointments

Extenuating circumstances where full awards are paid as fellowships can be accomplished by an approved petition to the Graduate School. Departments are reminded that students appointed as fellows are not eligible for GatorGradCare. Their health care would be obtained through the United Health Care student health insurance plan. These appointments must be accomplished by use of the MOU form.

MFA Awards

Our MFA programs will receive Graduate School Funding Awards (GSFA) for their selected students. Selected students will receive \$22,000 annually for 3 years. MFA programs will follow the same allocation structure described in Table 1 above with the opportunity to generate additional awards if 5-year graduation rates are at least 82% and URM enrollment percentages are no less than 22%. Splitting of MFA awards must be approved by the Graduate School.