

**GRADUATE SCHOOL
PREEMINENCE AWARDS PROGRAM GUIDELINES**
Effective Fall 2017

Graduate School Preeminence Award (GSPA) Policy Summary

The purpose of the Graduate School Preeminence Award (GSPA) program is to help academic units offer highly competitive research/teaching assistantship stipends to their strongest 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 \$25,000 annually for 4 years. The Graduate School will provide an additional \$4,000 to each GSPA for a full amount of \$29,000. For each GSPA, academic programs must provide additional supplement amounts determined by their general academic discipline—STEM/non-STEM. The minimum supplements are \$7000 for STEM programs and \$4,000 for non-STEM programs, creating minimum full GSPA stipends of \$36,000 and \$33,000, respectively.

Though the preference is for 4-year awards, GSPAs can be offered for 5-years. The base for each 5-year GSPA will be \$20,000 per year. The Graduate School will provide an additional \$3,200 for the full amount of \$23,200 annually. For each 5-year GSPA, academic programs must provide the same additional supplement amounts determined by their general academic discipline—STEM/non-STEM, with minimum supplements for STEM and non-STEM at \$7,000 and \$4,000, respectively. In keeping with the spirit of providing competitive stipends for GSPA awardees, full 5-year stipends will be at least \$30,200 and \$27,200 for STEM and non-STEM, respectively.

Though not necessarily recommended, if GSPAs are divided, designated students should receive full GSPA stipend amounts for individual awardees. Colleges should submit their proposed guidelines on how GSPAs will be administered for approval by the Graduate School Dean. Once approved these guidelines should be distributed to the departments.

Importantly, instead of GSPAs, academic units have the option of offering the \$25,000 base amount under the same format as the previous Graduate School Fellowship Program. This component will be titled Graduate School Funding Award (GSFA) and is described more fully below.

Students with **full** GSPA or GSFA funding from the Graduate School who win large external fellowships such as the NSF-GRFP, will receive up to \$5,000 top-up funding to augment their external stipends during their external 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 five years.

Additionally, students with full GSPA or GSFA funding **should not** be engaged in outside paid employment 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

As mentioned, though the Graduate School provides \$29,000 toward each GSPA, the actual number of awards are based on \$25,000 annual 4-year increments. The Graduate School provides the additional \$4,000 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 9; 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 @ \$25K
4 to 5	1
6 to 9	2
10 to 13	3
14 to 18	4
19 to 23	5
24 to 28	6
29 to 34	7
35 to 40	8
>40	9

The Graduate School Funding Award (GSFA) Option

As each award has a \$25,000 base, academic programs or colleges have the option of choosing to award \$25,000 4-year assistantship stipends to entering PhD students instead of full GSPAs. Those awards will be termed Graduate School Funding Awards (GSFAs). GSFAs can be offered as 5-year \$20,000 assistantship stipends when preferred, but the assistantship appointments should be at the .40 FTE rate. Additionally, full GSFAs can be divided into quarters or fifths as assistantship top-ups for entering PhD students. Note: Full GSFAs can be **no less** than \$25,000 for 4 years or \$20,000 for 5 years. Academic units can supplement GSFAs with additional funds if desired.

Generating Additional Awards for GSPA and GSFA

Additional awards can be generated based upon two primary outcomes:

- 1) A graduation rate of 71% or more and/or
- 2) An overall graduation rate of at least 66% 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 with 40 enrolled PhD students and a 5-year graduation average of 9 plus a graduate rate of 75%, as well as an underrepresented minority enrollment percentage that meets the threshold, can generate a total of 3 GSPAs above the 1 generated solely on the average number of graduates.

Allocation of Awards to Academic Units

Distribution of awards to departments or programs is at the discretion of the college deans. Allocations are based on fixed dollar amounts and not cumulative pay periods. Colleges and academic programs will determine how awards are assigned.

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 or GSFA recipients. Funds will be distributed based upon the amount of annual used stipend for each cohort. 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.

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: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/academic-personnel/graduate-assistants/> 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.

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 http://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/forms/academic/gaappointment_GS_3_14_2016_Revised.doc. **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 Academic and Student Personnel website: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/academic-personnel/pre-and-postdoctoral-fellows/graduate-assistants-and-fellows-hiring-process/registration-requirements-for-graduate-assistants-and-fellows/>

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: <http://hr.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/forms/academic/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 \$20,000 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 85% and URM enrollment percentages are no less than 24%.