

Guidelines for SMAST Student Stipends and Fees

This document is intended to provide uniform guidelines and practices for all SMAST students, consistent with UMassD Graduate Programs Policy and in the interest of maintaining a nationally competitive program. An earlier version of these guidelines were first presented by Interim Dean John Farrington and approved by SMAST faculty on 10 December 2010. Note that in situations where these guidelines may conflict with those of UMassD, the latter will always take precedence.

A. Scope of Guidelines

These guidelines only apply to SMAST graduate students.

B. Definitions (as adopted from the UMassD Guidelines for Graduate Student Financial Support)

- A full graduate stipend requires 20 hours of service per week during the academic year
- A full-time student is a graduate student taking 9 or more credits per semester.
- Academic Year starts on September 1 and ends on May 31 of each calendar year (starting and ending dates in contracts go by payroll weeks, which could differ slightly from the Academic Calendar).
- Research Assistant: a matriculated graduate student who conducts research within a laboratory setting and whose stipend and Curriculum Support Fee (CSF) payment is supported by external funding sources or start-up funds provided to faculty.

C. Standardized pay schedule

The UMassD Guidelines for Graduate Student Financial Support provide financial support for Doctoral Research Assistant stipends as \$18,000 per year [calendar year or academic year] – the level could be higher or lower depending on discipline, stage of program, contributions to the PI's research program, availability of funding - for twenty hours per week during academic year, may be up to 40 hours during summer months, plus tuition waiver with CSF support provided by grant. Certain older grants have CSF waivers grandfathered into effect until the termination of the grant. The minimum research assistantship stipend for Master's students in the Natural Sciences, Engineering, Nursing, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education is \$12,000 for 20 hours per week or \$6,000 for 10 to 19 hours.

The following pay schedule for a calendar year was approved by SMAST faculty for all SMAST assistantships conditional on availability of funding:

- \$20,000 - Masters students
- \$22,000 - PhD candidates prior to comprehensive exams and proposal
- \$25,000 - PhD candidates after successfully completing comprehensive exams and defending their dissertation proposal

D. Tuition and Fees

According to the UMassD Guidelines for Graduate Student Financial Support, Research Assistants include a tuition waiver by Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and 100% CSF support for full-time award (20 hours per week) and 50% CSF support for half-time award (minimum of 10 hours per week) must be paid for by external funds. Certain older grants have CSF waivers grandfathered into effect until the termination of the grant.

The CSF, SMAST college fee, health fee, and health insurance can be charged to sponsored project accounts. The CSF and the SMAST college fee can, in some cases, be waived as cost share or due to funding agency restrictions, but these waivers must be pre-approved by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and SMAST Dean, respectively.

OMB Circular A-21 prohibits payments for student clubs and activities; therefore the athletic fee, student fees and campus center fee cannot be charged to federal grants. These can be charged to other university funds. To the extent that funding allows, faculty members are encouraged to include an additional \$500 in the student's assistantship to cover the fees that cannot be charged to federal grants and an additional \$500 to international students to cover the International Student Fee.

E. Administrative Procedures

Each academic year the following procedures should be followed to ensure all eligible students are funded and to request funding for students without sufficient funding to meet the amounts specified above:

- At approximately the beginning of each spring semester (mid to late January), each faculty advisor is responsible for developing a plan for funding their student and working with the department chair to identify funding options for the following academic year.
- In situations where no response is given or no information provided by the advisor, then the student funding will be assigned to the faculty advisor's indirect account until such time that another source of funding is identified.
- If additional support is needed to provide stipends at the suggested amounts detailed above, the department chairs will work with the faculty advisor to identify other potential funding such as PI indirect, department indirect, or other unrestricted accounts. In some instances, students can be supported on another faculty member's (other than their principal advisor) sponsored projects, as long as the student provides adequate research assistance on the project.
- If adequate funding for a student cannot be identified within the department, the advisor may forward a request through the department chair to the SMAST Dean for student support. These requests should be made no later than March 1. All such requests will be considered based on availability of other sources of funds, student progress and academic standing, and other criteria as appropriate.
- Depending upon available funding, it is expected that SMS funds will be used to support TA's for SMS courses requiring such assistance, RA's to assist with the sea water and test tank facilities, new students who do not have sponsored research funding, and other students in good academic standing requiring bridge funding.
- In some instance, bridge funding requests may be made to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, but all requests should be made through the Graduate Program Director (i.e., the SMAST Associate Dean).
- Although the deadline for information can adjust as it relates to pending proposals and additional opportunities, all potential bridge funding requests should be recommended to the Dean by March 1st
- Distinguished Doctoral Fellowships will be awarded only to applicants who are nominated by their department chair. The department chair should forward the nominations to the Graduate Program Director (GDP). The GDP, in consultation with the

SMAST Executive committee, will review nominations and rank applicants. The Graduate Program Director (GDP) will send an e-mail to the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies with the ranked list of nominees (multiple nominations are allowed). Selection of Distinguished Doctoral Fellows will occur in February, so nominations should be sent no later than February 15th.

F. Other Guidelines

The following guidelines are applicable to all SMAST graduate research assistants as documented in the UMassD Guidelines for Graduate Student Financial Support:

- Students on academic probation, i.e., students who have GPAs below 3.0 or have enrolled in 12 credits of Dissertation Research without submitting and successfully defending a research proposal are not eligible for assistantships or fellowships. Petitions can be filed by the student's advisor and/or the Graduate Program Director to allow a student to continue in a RA position.
- The maximum length of time for graduate financial support from university sources (Teaching Fellows, TA II, TA I, Graduate Fellowships, Distinguished Graduate Fellowships, Distinguished Art Fellowships, Graduate Assistants) is two years for a Master's degree program (three years for three-year professional terminal Master's programs) or four years for a Doctoral degree program. RA support is limited to a maximum of three years for Master's students and six years for Doctoral students who enter the program with only a Bachelor's degree and five years for those who enter the program with a Master's degree. All awards as TA, GA, and RA throughout the student's program of study at a given level are included in the calculation of maximum time for financial support.
- The University only establishes the minimum levels of graduate stipends for the academic year. PIs, academic departments and colleges can enhance the support packages such as a stipend for the summer months.
- A mixed package of TF, TA, RA and GA support with full, half, quarter, or no CSF waiver is allowed.
- A limited number of full or half CSF waivers can be awarded to first-year full-time doctoral students without a stipend.
- An assistantship recommendation form for graduate students in "program continuation" status is not needed. These students will not be issued formal contracts since benefits cannot be waived for students in this status. The Non Work-Study Program Hiring Form which will place the student on Payroll for stipend payment is the only form needed. The payroll form should indicate the employment status of the student – i.e. research assistant, teaching assistant, graduate assistant, etc.
- By federal regulation, all individuals receiving compensation must demonstrate eligibility to work in the U.S.A. by filing Federal Form I-9.