

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate College

### Graduate Assistant Appointments and Stipends

#### Overview

Recruiting and retaining graduate students is a priority for Iowa State University. The full financial packages (stipends, benefits, and tuition scholarships) offered to some graduate applicants need to be competitive. Our upcoming transition to appointing graduate assistants (GAs) on defined periods of time (terms) is intended to increase our competitiveness. The vast majority of GAs will be assured of full-term appointments that provide equal monthly stipend payments. Several term options with flexible start and end dates will be available through an efficient administrative appointment process. During and beyond FY20, suggestions for how we might improve our appointment procedures in student-centered ways will be welcome.

#### Further Detail & Frequently Asked Questions

##### ***What is a graduate assistantship?***

An assistantship provides financial support to a degree-seeking graduate student. The university expects the graduate assistant (GA) to engage in designated teaching, research, or administrative-service efforts that enhance the student's education. While graduate faculty and the institution benefit from the activities of GAs, the primary purpose of an assistantship is to support student learning and development. Our appointment practices will pertain to all three types of GAs, teaching, research, and administrative assistants.

##### ***Why update the practices for appointing GAs? How will this be an improvement?***

Our updated practices will standardize the majority of appointments to full terms and result in appointed students being assured of equal monthly payments.

##### ***What is a stipend?***

"A stipend is a regular fixed sum of money paid for services, or to defray expenses, such as for scholarship, internship, or apprenticeship." Stipend pay recognizes a body of work by the graduate student rather than hours worked (i.e., it is not hourly payroll). Stipend pay will be spread evenly throughout the term of appointment, per the number of months corresponding to start and end dates, so that the GA receives the same pay each month.

##### ***Can I hire a graduate student as an hourly employee?***

Hourly employment of graduate students is possible but is restricted to ensure that GA appointments are used when the contributions of students relate to and enhance learning and professional development in their areas of scholarship. Please see the *Graduate College Handbook*.

##### ***Am I expected to appoint a GA for a full term, using standard dates for the term?***

Yes, the expectation is that the majority of GA appointments will be offered for a full academic term (Fall or Spring semester, Summer, or full calendar or academic year). Most GA appointments will adhere to term start and end date ranges that will be adjusted each year based on the university's academic calendar. Appointments for less than a full term will be permitted in FY20 due to timing of new grants or issues with student visas.

**What terms are available for appointments in FY20, and what are the minimum stipends for these terms?**

Numerous term options are available for FY20. Minima below apply to ½-time appointments.

CALENDAR YEAR		
Appointment Start	Appointment End	Minimum Stipend (\$)
August 5 - September 15	one year minus one day from start	24,500

  

ACADEMIC YEAR		
Appointment Start	Appointment End	Minimum Stipend (\$)
August 5 - September 15	May 8 – May 15	18,400

  

FALL 2019		
Appointment Start	Appointment End	Minimum Stipend (\$)
August 5 - September 15	December 20 - December 31	9,200
September 16 - October 20	December 20 - December 31	7,475
October 21 - last day tuition automatically reassesses	December 20 - December 31	4,600

  

SPRING 2020		
Appointment Start	Appointment End	Minimum Stipend (\$)
January 1 - February 2	May 8 – May 15	9,200
February 3 - March 8	May 8 – May 15	7,475
March 9 - last day tuition automatically reassesses	May 8 – May 15	4,600

  

SUMMER 2020 (entire)		
Appointment Start	Appointment End	Minimum Stipend (\$)
May 4 - July 1	August 7 - August 15	6,100

  

SUMMER 2020 (monthly)		
Appointment Start	Appointment End	Minimum Stipend (\$)
May 16, June 16, July 16	June 15, July 15, August 15	2,034

\* Date ranges may be affected by immigration regulations, and ranges will change annually with the academic calendar.

**What if I am awarded a new grant that provides funds starting late in a term, on November 1 for example, and I want to use those funds to support a student assistant starting that day?**

This will be possible, and a lower minimum stipend will apply (see table above).

**What are options when an international student's arrival is delayed until after the start of a semester?**

The Graduate College will allow appointments with reduced minimum stipends to begin after September 15 and February 2 in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, respectively, when it can be verified that an international student was unable to arrive earlier due to an unavoidable issue with a visa.

**Am I required to appoint a GA for the entire academic year, or can I appoint for only a term?**

You may make GA appointments for only an academic term (Fall or Spring Semester, Summer [part or all]), or for the entire academic or calendar year.

**Will I still be able to offer ¼-, ½-, or ¾-time assistantships?** Yes, though as in the past, international students not on curricular practical training may be on no more than ½-time GA appointments during the academic year.

**Can more than one funding source be used to create a GA position?**

Yes, though please see the next question about effort reporting and certification.

**Is stipend pay in compliance with effort reporting and certification?**

Yes, it must be. The appointment dates specified in the GA offer will be the actual start and end dates of GA-related activity and will fall within the designated ranges. The allocation process for payments allows the stipend amount to be allocated among multiple funding sources in relation to the benefit provided to the federal award (direct or indirect). This allocation process, combined with the appointment period closely coinciding with the period of services rendered, yields a practice compliant with the Effort Reporting and Certification Policy.

**May I set the work schedule for a GA?**

Yes. The PI/Supervisor will still set expectations, and manage the assistantship-related activities.

**What is the minimum term stipend for FY20?**

The minimum stipend rates for FY20 are shown below. As shown in the preceding table, lower minima apply to appointments that begin late in the fall or spring semester. PIs/Supervisors continue to have the option of offering a stipend rate higher than the minimum and often should do so to be competitive with financial packages offered by other institutions.

<b>Annual</b>	<b>Fall 19 or Spring 20</b>	<b>Summer 2020</b>	<b>Summer 2020 (monthly)</b>
<b>¼ time: \$12,250</b>	\$4,600	\$3,050	\$1,017
<b>½ time: \$24,500</b>	\$9,200	\$6,100	\$2,034
<b>¾ time: \$36,750</b>	\$13,800	\$9,150	\$3,050

**Why is the minimum stipend the same for a GA who starts in early September instead of in August for Fall?**

The vast majority of GAs start appointments in August (fall) and January (spring). A GA whose appointment begins shortly later than another GA can be expected to accomplish similar outcomes during the term. Remember that the specified dollar amounts are minima; higher stipends can be provided to GAs who begin comparatively early, and hiring units may narrow the range of start dates allowed by the Graduate College.

**Can a current GA accept an additional appointment, to add to a current appointment?**

Yes, this is possible in many cases. For example, domestic students on a ½-time GA can be appointed for a second, ¼-time GA. The standard term dates apply to the second appointment also. International students not on curricular practical training can be appointed to appointments up to ½ time during the academic year.

**What about leave for GAs? What can I allow for absences?**

The PI/supervisor will approve absences. Please see the *Graduate College Handbook*.

**What happens if the GA appointment ends early (i.e., the student completes all degree requirements or graduates before the end of the appointment)?**

The stipend will end at the end of the last month of GA-related activity; the remainder of the term pay will be forfeited. If a student ends an appointment before completing three months (Fall or Spring) or four weeks (Summer), the tuition scholarship is no longer guaranteed, and the student may be billed for the difference in the resident rate and the appropriate alternative rate.