

Graduate Assistantship Salary Guidelines April, 1996

It is expected that salary practices with regard to graduate assistants will parallel those followed for other employees of the University. External auditors, when reviewing the salaries paid, expect such payments to be in compliance with the institutional policy. The following represent general guidelines to assist you in establishing salary levels and adjusting salary amounts.

1. Initial Salary

The salaries paid to graduate assistants in a unit may all be identical or may differ based on a variety of factors. Some units have a practice of paying all graduate assistants the same amount regardless of the educational level of the students, particular assignment, etc. Units that pay different salaries to graduate assistants may use the factors described below in establishing the initial salary.

The initial salary for a graduate assistant may reflect the work related expectations of the graduate assistant, his/her past work experience, the number of hours (from 15 to 20, but not to exceed 20) that he/she is expected to work, and other comparable factors. It may also reflect the level of the degree the student is pursuing. For example, a unit may choose to provide a higher initial salary for a doctoral candidate than a master's candidate, the assumption being a difference in past experience, the salary should not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of gender, race, national origin, etc. The University Affirmative Action Plan identifies those factors that will not be considered in employment decisions or the establishment of compensation within the University.

Occasionally graduate students may serve as assistants in a unit other than the unit in which they are pursuing their degree. In such instances, the graduate assistant's compensation is guided by the policies and practices of the work unit rather than the degree unit.

2. Salary Changes

In proposing an increase or decrease in a salary amount, the following factors are among the reasons that may be justifiable. The availability of increased or decreased funding from a grant or other source is not an appropriate reason for a salary increase/decrease.

- ◆ The student's performance has been meritorious. Merit increases should be provided at about the same time such increases are provided to other employees of the University. Merit increases should be based on a written assessment of the student's performance.
- ◆ The graduate assistant has been given additional responsibilities within the time constraints noted above.
- ◆ The graduate assistant has been asked to work a greater number of hours per week while not exceeding the 20 hour per week limitation that is a part of institutional policy.
- ◆ Through the course of the assistantship, the graduate assistant has gained work experience which makes him/her a more valuable employee deserving a higher level of compensation.
- ◆ The duties assigned to the graduate assistant have changed. For example, a graduate teaching assistant may now be serving as a graduate research assistant.
- ◆ The student has progressed from a master's program to a doctoral program or from a first-year

master's student to a second-year master's student. Other changes in student status which might merit increased compensation could be such things as passing preliminary doctoral examinations.

Generally speaking, increases should not exceed 15% of the previous level of compensation paid to the graduate assistant. In some instances an increase greater than this amount may be appropriate. For example, if the work time expectation of a student has increased from 10 to 20 hours, a salary increase greater than 15% would be justified.

Reduced salaries are less common than increases. When a salary is reduced, it should reflect appropriate reasons such as decreased responsibilities, decreased work hours, etc.

Please feel free to contact Russ Dean for more information or with specific questions.