

Guidance on Budgeting Graduate Student Tuition in External Funding Proposals

Purpose: This guidance aims to ensure that graduate student tuition is appropriately budgeted in all external funding proposals that include graduate students in the work. This practice aligns with federal and university requirements and supports the financial sustainability of graduate education.

Scope: This guidance applies to all Principal Investigators (PIs) and administrators involved in developing sponsored project budgets or managing award funds.

Guidance Statement:

1. Inclusion of Tuition Costs:

- All proposals seeking external funding for graduate research assistants must include a request for tuition costs (tuition remission), except when the sponsor's guidelines or policies expressly prohibit recovery of tuition.
- Tuition benefits/remission may also be used as cost share when allowed by the sponsor, and the PI has been granted a tuition waiver from the Graduate School. See #5 Tuition Waiver Process below.
- If a GA is added to an active project and was not originally included in the proposal, the tuition expense for the GA must be paid by the active project.

2. Estimation of Tuition Costs:

- Faculty and departments are responsible for estimating the tuition amount allocable per student for each grant. This estimation should be based on the percentage of the student's work effort committed to the grant.
- Departments can calculate an estimate of tuition costs using the university's [Business Services General Tuition & Fees](#) website.
- Tuition will be budgeted using the current out-of-state tuition rate for any *To Be Named* graduate research assistants included in the budget.
- Summer tuition must be budgeted for graduate students working on a project during the summer months.
- Tuition costs will be inflated annually by 5%.

3. Employment Criteria:

- A graduate student receiving tuition on a grant must be a university employee with a portion of their work time committed to and paid from the grant via salary/payroll.
- The amount of tuition that the grant can pay must correlate to the percentage of available work effort the student is assigned to provide on the grant.
- Graduate students paid from institutional training grants such as NSF GRFP, HRSA BHWET, or other externally sponsored institutional training or fellowship programs may not be considered "employees." See #4 Institutional Training Grants (below).

4. Institutional Training/Individual Fellowship Grants – Employment Criteria:

- Graduate students supported by institutional training grants or individual fellowship programs (e.g., NSF GRFP, HRSA BHWET, NIH T32, NIH F31, or similar) are not considered employees of USM for the duration of their fellowship or training grant support. These students do not receive compensation through payroll and are instead paid via Accounts Payable (AP) in the form of monthly stipend checks.
- Tuition support is a critical component of these training and fellowship programs and should be budgeted following sponsor guidelines and institutional guidance.

5. Tuition Waiver Process:

- It is the responsibility of the PI to work with the Graduate School to request tuition waivers if tuition is an allowable expense but not feasible within the proposal budget, or a tuition waiver is needed to meet cost share requirements.
- The tuition waiver approval must be received prior to proposal submission. The PI can request tuition support from the Graduate School via the [Grant Proposal Graduate Assistant Tuition Waiver Request](#).

Applicability: This guidance applies to all sponsored project proposals involving graduate students, where the sponsor allows tuition costs to be included or a tuition waiver will be used to meet cost share requirements.