

**UC DAVIS GRADUATE STUDIES POLICY**  
**Appointment and Compensation of Graduate Student Researchers**  
**October 18, 2011**  
**Endorsed by Graduate Council – June 3, 2011**

**GS2011 – 03**

In 2003, UC Davis formally implemented the title of Graduate Student Researcher (GSR, title code 3282) for the academic appointment of graduate students. The GSR title is used primarily to fund graduate students who are conducting compensated research, normally as a part of the research required for their theses or dissertations. The procedures for this adoption and the process for transitioning from previously used title codes were described in Directive 02-098 dated July 19, 2002. This policy formalizes the use of the GSR title and updates policy regarding graduate program compensation plans.

Eligibility Requirements

All eligibility requirements for the GSR title are listed in UCD Appendix II-B of the Academic Personnel Manual. These requirements include criteria for registration status; GPA and student status; standard dates of appointment; percentage of appointment; and quarters of appointment. Each graduate program, however, must adopt its own compensation plan that defines qualifications for placement within the salary steps of the title code.

Minimum Appointment

Graduate Students must be appointed to the GSR title for a minimum of 25% time. Appointments at lower percentages (1-20%) will be permitted only as an augmentation to another award (e.g. an external fellowship) that provides fee and tuition remission to meet the level of compensation normally provided to students in the program.

Petitions for Exception to Policy

Information regarding situations under which prior approval is needed for a GSR appointment is described in UC Davis Graduate Studies Policy GS2011-02 and in UCD Appendix II-B of the Academic Personnel Manual. Programs may petition the Office of Graduate Studies for individual approvals as needed and for exceptions to policy by following the procedures described in those documents. However, petitions for exceptions will be approved only under compelling circumstances.

Fee and Tuition Remission

Graduate students appointed in the GSR title for at least 25% time for the full quarter with the appointment effective within the first week of the quarter are eligible for a remission of all required fees, tuition and nonresident supplemental tuition (if applicable). Students on filing fee status are not eligible for fee and tuition remission.

If the student appointee terminates her/his employment, he/she will receive fee and tuition remission in proportion to the time he/she was employed. In no case will the fee and tuition remission exceed the amounts charged by the registrar. To simplify the process the remission amount is tied to four-week periods:

- If the termination takes place between the first day of week 1 through the end of week 4, the student will receive 1/3 of the fee and tuition remission,
- If the termination takes place between the first day of week 5 through the end of week 8, the student will receive 2/3 of the fee and tuition remission,
- If the termination takes place between the first day of week 9 through the end of week 12, the student will receive the full fee and tuition remission.

### Vacation

Students appointed in the GSR title at 50% time or greater for 6 months are eligible for vacation benefits as described in Sections 730 and UCD 730 of the Academic Personnel Manual.

### Sick Leave

Students appointed in the GSR title code do not accrue sick leave.

### Compensation Plans

There are ten salary steps in the GSR title. These steps are defined in the University of California Academic Salary Scales. These tables are maintained by the University of California Office of the President and can be accessed on the web at <http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/> or via Graduate Studies at <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/facstaff>. Salary levels are adjusted by UCOP at the same time and generally in the same percentage as adjustments to other academic salaries, including those of faculty.

To be competitive in recruiting the very best students, graduate programs require flexibility in the salary level they may offer graduate students employed as GSRs. Therefore, graduate programs are required to file a compensation plan for approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies outlining the rationale for the plan, the step in the title code they will use for initially hiring students and the program-specific qualifications students will need to meet. The compensation plan should also present the qualifications for students to advance to further steps in the title code and describe which steps the graduate program will use in the advancement process. Compensation plans must specifically identify percentage appointments by step during the academic year and during the summer. Graduate programs should review compensation plans on a regular basis, and no less than every three years, to ensure that salaries offered to students hired in this title are competitive. A copy of the currently approved compensation plan must also be filed with the appropriate staff in the lead dean's office for the graduate program.

In developing a compensation plan, graduate programs should consider the expected needs of graduate students to meet basic living needs. Each year, the UC Davis Financial Aid Office calculates the amount of annual income needed by graduate students to meet basic living standards in Davis. For 2011-12, this amount is \$22,461 (\$1,872 monthly for 12 months) exclusive of fees and tuition. This target can be met in a variety of ways, including a calendar year appointment at 49% time at Step V (total of \$22,532 annually) or a 50% academic year and 80% summer appointment at Step III (total of \$22,949 annually).

Programs that do not file a compensation plan will use the “default plan” shown in Exhibit A, with initial hiring at step III of the title at 50% academic year and 80% summer. An alternative example compensation plan is attached to this document as Exhibit B. In reviewing their compensation plans, graduate programs are urged to consider changes to the annual student expense budget published by the Financial Aid Office (9-month expense budgets are posted at <http://financialaid.ucdavis.edu/graduate/Cost/grad.html>) and changes to the GSR salary scales (<http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/>).

Exhibit A: Default GSR Compensation Plan

|  | Step   | Percent                         | Annual Compensation (2011-2012 pay scale) |
|--|--------|---------------------------------|---|
| Initial appointment of students with a bachelor’s degree only  | III    | 50% academic year<br>80% summer | \$22,949                                  |
| An appointee who has completed a master’s program but has not yet advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree  | IV     | 50% academic year<br>80% summer | \$24,792                                  |
| An appointee who has advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree but who has not completed their dissertation research or filed the dissertation with the Office of Graduate Studies | V-VIII | 50% academic year<br>80% summer | \$26,441–<br>\$32,264                     |

## Exhibit B: Example GSR Compensation Plan

The following is a sample compensation plan for a graduate program:

### Justification

The Graduate Group in XYZ is in the top tier of programs in its field in the United States. Recent rankings by the Association of XYZ and articles in the XYZ Journal rank the UC Davis program 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> respectively. A review of research awards shows that the faculty in the XYZ group have been extremely competitive in research and training grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and other large granting agencies. The Graduate Group in XYZ offers distinct programs leading to both a Master of Science and a Doctor of Philosophy.

However, the program in XYZ is facing strong competition in recruiting the best students. Programs among the top ten have a strong reputational advantage in recruiting students. Additionally, several of these programs at University of A, at B State University and at DEF College offer stipends well above the entry level GSR salary. Additionally, these programs typically waive or offer reduced out-of-state tuition for non-resident and international students. Programs ranked slightly below the Graduate Group in XYZ are also applying pressure. For example, the program at MNO University has recently raised entry-level salaries in order to be more financially attractive to top-notch applicants.

One area in which the Graduate Group in XYZ can compete more successfully for the very best graduate students is the research stipend. Because of the strong record of grant funding established by the faculty in the group, we feel confident that we can offer top students better stipends. This will build the group's research effort immeasurably and increase the visibility of the group both nationally and internationally.

### Compensation Steps

The graduate group in XYZ therefore proposes the following plan for GSR appointments for students affiliated with the group:

|   | Step | Percent                         | Annual Compensation (2011-2012 pay scale) |
|---|------|---------------------------------|---|
| Initial appointment of students with a bachelor's degree only   | V    | 49% academic year<br>49% summer | \$22,532                                  |
| An appointee who has completed one year of graduate study but has not yet advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree | VI   | 49% academic year<br>49% summer | \$23,579                                  |
| An appointee who has completed a master's program but has not yet advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree         | VII  | 49% academic year<br>49% summer | \$25,466                                  |

|   |      |                                 |                        |
|---|------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| An appointee who has advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree but who has not completed their dissertation research  | VIII | 49% academic year<br>49% summer | \$27,495               |
| An appointee who has completed dissertation research for the doctoral degree and is writing the dissertation prior to filing it with the Office of Graduate Studies | IX-X | 49% academic year<br>49% summer | \$29,706 –<br>\$32,075 |

Submitted:

\_\_\_\_\_  
P. Shields  
Chair, Graduate Group in XYZ

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean – Graduate Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date