




To: Academic Deans
Vice and Associate Deans Responsible for
Graduate Programs

From: Sally Pratt, Vice Provost for Graduate Programs 

Date: February 27, 2017

Subject: Minimum Total Stipends for USC Graduate Students - Amended

This memo has been amended to provide additional information related to stipend levels over the next two years and stipends paid over 9 or 12 months.

In order to allow USC's PhD programs to compete more effectively for the very best students and to support USC students once they enroll, the Provost has approved the following increases in the USC minimum total stipend. We believe these increases in the level of financial assistance are the right thing to do considering the caliber of students we seek and enroll. We have benchmarked against top AAU Carnegie R1 universities that, like USC, are in major metropolitan regions, while taking account of the financial constraints on USC schools and principal investigators.

In fields that typically fund students on a 9-month basis, the minimum total Ph.D. stipend will increase to \$26,000 in 2017-2018 and \$30,000 in 2018-2019. For fields that operate on a 12-month basis, the minimum total stipends will be \$30,000 in 2017-2018 and \$32,000 in 2018-2019. The stipend is financial aid, and the minimum total stipend applies whether the student is on a fellowship, or serving as a TA or RA, regardless of the source or sources of funding, as explained below. Schools are expected to ensure that students are supported at the level of the university minimum total stipend or at a higher level for the duration of the package in their original offer letters. Schools are expected to offer all incoming PhD students multi-year packages, as is the case with the current Joint Fellowships funded by the Graduate School in collaboration with the individual USC schools. The specific terms of a student's offer letter may be enhanced, but may not be diminished.

Total stipends may be paid in the form of fellowships, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, graduate assistant lectureships, top offs, various forms of government support, or combinations of these elements. The total must *meet or exceed* the university minimum total stipend, which is calculated as the equivalent of a 50% appointment reflecting up to 20 hours of effort per week during the academic year and, in 12-month fields, 50% effort over the summer. TA and RA stipends for appointments at 25% and 33% (to be combined with additional funding for a total minimum stipend) are calculated at 4.5 months each for fall and spring semesters. Summer RAships are calculated as 3 months of funding. Summer TAships are compensated by the course, exactly as in fall and spring, even if the course is on a compressed schedule for summer. Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants, research assistants, and graduate assistant lecturers are in *The Handbook for Teaching Assistants (TAs), Research Assistants (RAs), and Graduate Assistant Lecturers (ALs)*, which can be found at http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_guidelines_forms.html.

Fellowships, as distinct from appointments as TAs, RAs, or ALs, allow students to focus solely on their own academic work. For this reason, fellowships cannot be fragmented and combined with TA

or RA appointments, whether the fellowships are from USC or external funders. Total stipends for fellowships must match or exceed the USC minimum total stipend, and may include top offs. The Graduate School tops off many nationally competitive fellowships. Please get in touch with Meredith Drake Reitan at mereditd@usc.edu, or me at pratt@usc.edu, if you have questions in this area, or any others.

USC health and dental insurance policies and the USC student health center fee will continue to be part of the PhD funding package. The costs will be provided as soon as rates are available. There is no change in the way PhD tuition is handled by the university.

cc: Michael Quick
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