

# Students: Baseline & Stipends

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### Personnel Costs: Graduate Students with Stipend Support

- Memorial University's School of Graduate Studies (SGS) defines a stipend as "a fixed amount of money paid in a lump sum or biweekly over a period of time. It is not for employment but to offset basic living expenses while students are completing their education." According to the [Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration](#) (TAGFA) a [stipend](#) is: "financial support given to a recipient of a training award, or provided by a grant recipient to a trainee, to support them while they are working on their research thesis and/or gaining research experience."
- In research grant applications, you can request that the sponsor cover a full student stipend. HSS considers competitive stipend rates, at minimum, as a stipend that matches **Tri-Agency fellowship rates**, which are, as of Sept. 1, 2024:
  - **Masters Fellowships - \$27,000/yr for max 12 months**
  - **Doctoral Fellowships - \$40,000/yr for max 36 months**

### Using Memorial's Baseline in Grant Proposal Budgets

- 'Baseline' refers to the base amount provided by SGS to departments towards the offer of a stipend to a graduate student, normally for studies towards a thesis. Baseline cannot be used to pay students for tasks normally paid for through hourly [Graduate Research Assistant wages](#). The total baseline provided to students is governed by departmental practices/policies, program policies, and by SGS. In HSS, SGS allocates a base amount per student as part of calculating departmental baseline budgets:
  - **Maximum SGS baseline totals for HSS students as of April 1, 2022:**
    - **\$8,000 per MA student**, per year, to a maximum of 2 years
    - **\$14,000 per PhD student**, per year, to a maximum of 4 years
- The HSS Dean's Office strongly encourages supervisors to consider effective combining of baseline with research funding to secure higher overall stipend package totals (at Tri-Agency fellowship totals, for ex.) for graduate students whose thesis will be associated with funded research projects.
- Therefore, if you don't want to, or can't (e.g. due to budget constraints) ask a sponsor, such as SSHRC or NSERC, for a full stipend, you can request that your department commit baseline to your project, which can then be 'topped up' with sponsor funding.
- Baseline committed towards a research grant application can be valued as a cash contribution, with departmental and SGS approval. In the budget of the grant application, you should then ask the sponsor for the *remainder* of the funds needed to top-up the total stipend to the level that you/your department would like to offer.
  - Any consideration of the use of Baseline funding in your budget as a cash contribution must begin with your Department Head and/or Graduate Officer. For an outline of the process for confirming baseline and securing approvals, refer to HSS's document: [Future Departmental-SGS Baseline Request Form](#).
  - Requests for baseline commitments should normally be submitted well in advance (~6 weeks) of the HSS internal deadline for the relevant competition. The [HSS Research Funding Tracker](#) provides submission information, including HSS internal deadlines.
  - If your department's baseline policies or agreements with SGS differ from the SGS default baseline rates listed above (as indicated by either SGS or your department),

your cash contribution must be listed in your grant based on what your *department* has approved, as indicated on the [Baseline form](#).

- For further information on baseline, see [Guidelines for the Awarding of SGS Baseline Fellowships and Graduate Student Support](#).
  - Note 2.9 which states that departments may adjust/reduce baseline for students who receive major external scholarships including, but not limited to, Tri-Agency ones. Using the [Baseline Request Form](#), your Department Head or Graduate Officer should specify what will happen with baseline funding in the event that a grant-funded student is awarded a major scholarship/fellowship.
  - Note: SGS will *not* provide additional funding if a Masters or Doctoral student receives more than \$35,000/yr (MA) or \$50,000/yr (PhD) from all sources (excluding Graduate Assistantships/GRAs).

### Stipends vs GRAs

- Unlike with [Graduate Research Assistant \(GRA\)](#) wages, vacation pay or benefits are *not* included in baseline or stipends, as *stipends are not regarded as employment income*.
- **Stipend work vs GRA work:** Stipend activities are *not* typically the type of work that would be performed by a GRA hired by hourly wages. There are many considerations in deciding whether to include students with stipend and/or baseline support or students hired as GRA employees in your grant proposal's budget and research project activities.
- Tasks and activities supported by stipends normally form part of graduate student's thesis work, internship, etc. The results of these research activities may be used towards the thesis and/or the Principal Investigator's (PI) project. However, **Intellectual Property (IP)** considerations exist:
  - Students who receive a stipend have rights to IP for "any form of knowledge or expression created partly or wholly with one's intellect and which can be legally protected," including tasks and activities supported by a stipend from research funding. See Memorial's document, [Intellectual Property of Graduate Students](#) for more information.
  - Oppositely, resultant IP from GRA activities would belong to the PI of the grant (see point 6.1B of the [Intellectual Property of Graduate Students](#) document).
  - See HSS's Budget Help Doc [Hiring Students: URAs and GRAs](#) for more details.

### Institutional-Specific Rates

- Check sponsor guidelines to ensure which institution's stipend rates and policies should be used for your budget. For Tri-Agency budgets, you may have to use rates for the institution where stipends will be offered to students associated with your project. Consult with research offices or graduate studies offices at other institutions for applicable stipend rates, as well as any other relevant policies or guidelines.