National Science Foundation (NSF)
Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)
Frequently Asked Questions as of July 15, 2020

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Q1. How much is the annual stipend?
The Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) stipend is currently $34,000 for a 12-month tenure period, prorated monthly at $2,833.00 ($2,834.00 every 2nd month of the quarter). You will receive monthly payments to your BAR account. Depending on your NSF GRFP start time, you will receive your first stipend for July (Summer Start) or October (Fall Start). Stipends are paid out 1–2 weeks before the start of the stipend month (July stipend will be paid out at the end of June) except for your January stipend. The January stipend will be paid out at the beginning of the month when Winter quarter begins. Note: If you have any outstanding charges on your account (e.g., instructional enhancement charges, Ashe Center charges, library fines), those charges will be paid first before your stipend is paid out.

BRUIN DIRECT: You are strongly encouraged to establish a Bruin Direct account (https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Registration-Classes/Registration-and-Payment/Refunds-and-Reductions/ BruinDirect-Refund-Deposit), which will allow you to receive your funds electronically and quicker than if you do not have a Bruin Direct account (the alternative is snail mail to the address on file with the Registrar’s Office). The Bruin Direct account disburses fellowship and financial aid payments; it is not connected to payroll. Thus, if you have direct deposit for your salary payments, you would need to set up Bruin Direct separately on your MYUCLA account.

Q2. Are my fees and tuition covered while I am on the NSF GRFP?
Your GRFP fellowship also comes with an institutional allowance/cost of education (COE) of $12,000 during your tenure years. This institutional allowance is automatically applied to graduate tuition/fees. Your school/department/program and the Graduate Division will split (50–50) the difference between the institutional allowance and actual tuition/fees, including professional school supplemental tuition and non-resident supplemental tuition (NRST). By accepting the NSF GRFP, UCLA promises not to charge students for the difference between the cost of education allowance provided and the graduate fees and tuition currently in place. The University, not the Fellow, is responsible for paying any balance of fees/tuition while on tenure. Note: The department may not pay the student a stipend and request for the student to pay the balance of fees from the awarded stipend. Note that the departmental payment could vary if the awardee receives an appointment as an academic apprentice.

Your January payments will be made in early January, after tuition/fees are due. However, you will not be assessed any late charges, because the system knows you are receiving a graduate tuition/fee payment fellowship.

Q3. How many years of graduate support do I get?
All awards are for a maximum of three years usable over a five-year period while in graduate school (i.e., two years may be put on reserve at any time during the five-year period). If you finish your three years of funding before the five-year period is up, put the last two years On Reserve. Doing so will enable you to take advantage of supplemental programs that NSF might make available to active Fellows (e.g., the Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide [GROW] and Graduate Research Internship Program [GRIP]).

Q4. I didn’t receive my full graduate NSF GRFP stipend. Why not?
Check your MYUCLA account to see if you have other charges on your bill. If so, those charges were paid before the stipend was disbursed to you. If not, perhaps the stipend went toward your tuition/fees. This should not happen. Please contact the NSF Coordinating Official if this occurs.

Q5. Whom do I contact if I have a question about the disbursement of my GRFP funding payments?
Due to COVID-19, we are currently working remotely. Please contact NSF GRFP Coordinating Official, Shannon Yu, at syu@grad.ucla.edu or uclafellowship@grad.ucla.edu.
Q6. What is the activities report, and when is it due?
A9. Each year, irrespective of Fellow’s status, you must submit online at FastLane (www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do) a brief report (1 page) summarizing your accomplishments and experiences during the past year of graduate study. These reports are due before declaring tenure for the next year. Please include information relevant to your graduate research or coursework, such as papers, exhibitions, publications, conferences, etc. It is important to fill this out because NSF uses this to determine the success of the program, and consequently, to obtain future funding. Your faculty mentor must sign into FastLane to approve your activities report. Your mentor’s approval must be submitted so you can declare tenure by May 1.

Q7. Can I apply for additional funding?
The fellowship does not provide allowances for special student needs, such as research expenses, travel to scientific conferences, travel to employment sites, computers, books and publications, fieldwork expenses, special study. However, GRFP fellows can apply for additional funding opportunities like the the Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW) and Graduate Research Internship Program (GRIP). Depending on the funding source, fellows may be allowed to apply to other external and internal funding.

NSF GRFP awards cannot be concurrently accepted or combined with another US Government Federal Fellowship, irrespective of the Fellow’s Tenure Status.

Q8. How do I renew my graduate fellowship for next year?
By May 1, you must submit online at FastLane (https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/index.jsp) a Declaration to Utilize, Reserve or Terminate a Subsequent Year of a 3-year Graduate Fellowship Award for the purpose of declaring whether you will utilize or reserve your fellowship for the following year. All Fellows, even those on reserve, MUST submit this form via the Graduate Fellowship Administration System on FastLane each year. Failure to declare your intent at this time results in your fellowship being considered as terminated. Terminated fellowships will not be reinstated.

Q9. How do I transfer my graduate fellowship to another institution?
If you wish to transfer from one graduate institution to another during a fellowship year, you must submit online at FastLane (https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/index.jsp) a Tenure Change request to NSF (which must be verified by the Coordinating Official in 1228 Murphy Hall) as well as evidence of acceptance to the new institution. Please contact the Coordinating Official from both institution so they are aware of the transfer.

Q10. Can I work while on the NSF GRFP?
Fellows may engage in employment related to academic activity (e.g., GSR and TA appointments) while on tenure. Per Graduate Division’s policy, the standard allowable appointment percentage is at 25%, or 10 hours per week. Appointments over 25% are not encouraged and exceptions to work over 25% time would need to be submitted and approved before the fellow can work more than 10 hours per week. Fellows with approval to work over 25% time cannot work more than 50% time or 20 hours per week.

Q11. Can I have another graduate fellowship while I have the NSF?
It depends upon the source of the other fellowship and the maximum stipend limit set by the Graduate Division. NSF does not allow Fellows to concurrently accept federal funding, but exceptions include: Veteran Benefits, ROTC Training Allowance, and Fulbright U.S. Student Program Study/Research Abroad Grants.

For the Graduate Division maximum stipend limit, ask your department Student Affairs Officer/Staff Graduate Advisor or check the following website: https://grad.ucla.edu/funding/financial-aid/maximum-limit-of-merit-based-support/.

Q12. Must I refund the fellowship if I withdraw from school without completing my course of study?
It depends on when you withdraw. According to NSF GRFP guidelines, you must be enrolled in the institution for at least 14 days of the particular month to receive that month’s stipend. Once you withdraw, no further funding will be distributed after you end your enrollment.

Q13. Is the NSF fellowship subject to Federal income tax?
Yes. You bear the responsibility of paying any tax, domestic or foreign, if due. Additionally, you are responsible for filing all proper tax forms when there is a tax liability. See IRS Publications 970 and 505 at http://www.irs.gov.

You will not receive any form from UCLA or NSF at the end of the calendar year regarding the amount of your fellowship. So be sure to keep a copy of your award letter. Also, you may get an unofficial record of all your fellowship payments by logging on to My.UCLA.edu and checking the Finances and Jobs section.


Q14. Can I go abroad? Will my fellowship fund my trip?
NSF encourages Fellows to apply for other NSF opportunities announced through “Dear Colleague” emails. One such opportunity is the Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW), which provides $5,000 from NSF and living expenses from an organization in the host country.

What is our NSF grant number?
During the period 2020-2021, the number is DGE-1650604 and DGE-2034835.

Where can I find more information on my responsibilities as a current NSF Graduate Fellow?
Additional information may be obtained at www.fastlane.nsf.gov/grfp/Login.do in the Administrative Guide for Fellows & Coordinating Officials.