



To: ALL FACULTY, FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
From: JAYNE GARLAND, DEAN
Date: May 15, 2023
Re: Graduate Student Funding Policy – Faculty of Health Sciences

Background

In 2018, the Faculty of Health Sciences introduced a policy whereby supervisors of PhD students are required to contribute \$2,000 annually during the funding eligibility period toward the guaranteed minimum funding package of each PhD student.

On March 20, 2023, Western publicly announced an increase in financial and resource support for graduate students. Western's minimum funding package for doctoral students (from all sources) is being increased by \$4,000, effective September 1, 2023, to \$17,000 plus tuition. The new funding guarantee will apply to all eligible doctoral students and will be reviewed at the end of the upcoming three-year planning cycle (2025-2026). Programs were asked to re-issue offer letters to new PhD students / applicants who were promised a funding support package of less than \$23,360, effective September 1, 2023.

FHS PhD Student Policy Statement

Supervisors of PhD students have been required to contribute \$2,000 annually during the funding eligibility period toward the guaranteed funding package of each PhD student. Supervisors unable to provide the \$2,000 will not be eligible to take **new** PhD students, effective immediately; however, any offers already made to PhD students for 2023-2024 will be honoured.

Supervisor funding contribution may come from external grants, start up funds, or internal research grants, if permitted under the terms of the grant. This policy applies to students in the following graduate programs: (i) Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, (ii) Kinesiology, (iii) Nursing, and (iv) Neuroscience. The academic year for a PhD appointment will be from September 1 – August 31, regardless of start / program entry. Students that join mid-year will have their packages pro-rated accordingly.

The \$2,000 annual contribution should be in the form of a Graduate Fellowship (GF). The Graduate Fellowship amount will be paid to students in the summer term (May – August). If a student receives a scholarship (\$15,000 or more) for the next academic year but elects to activate the award early (May instead of September), then the student will receive the original FHS funding package for the summer term, including receiving the \$2000 supervisor contribution. Supervisors will still be required to contribute the supervisor contribution for the current academic year. The student and supervisor will fall under the appropriate scholarship funding model for the upcoming academic year (September through to August).

Supervisors will be required to complete an annual declaration form (to be distributed electronically) and provide the required funding information / speed code before accepting PhD students.

If a supervisor is unable to provide a Graduate Fellowship, consideration will be provided for supervisor to contribute in the amount of a Graduate Student Assistantship (GSA). In this situation, a request for hire form must be completed and the supervisors must indicate that this hire is part of the students minimum funding package (as indicated on the request for hire form).

Supervisors who top up the minimum funding package (i.e., contribute more than \$2000) must provide clarity for their students as to the total funding that the student is expected to receive that year. The additional top up may be provided in any term.

For students co-supervised by two research supervisors, a total annual contribution of \$2,000 is required per PhD student. This could be split between the two research supervisors, or paid by one supervisor, depending on their respective funding circumstances. Often there are nominal co-supervisors (because of SGPS rules) who might not be expected to contribute.

Typical minimum funding packages will now comprise of 210 hours of Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA; an increase from 140 hours), the supervisor contribution, and Western Graduate Research Scholarship (WGRS). Examples of funding scenarios are in the attached schedule.

Students who decline any part of the GTA will have their funding package reduced by the equivalent funding. Supervisors who do not wish their student to accept any part of the GTA will be required to provide equivalent funding for the minimum funding package in the form of a GF or GSA.

PhD students with *total* funding from scholarships (whether internal (funded by a donor) or external, including sponsored international students) that exceeds the minimum funding package of \$23,360 (e.g., doctoral awards from CIHR, SSHRC, NSERC of \$35,000) will not receive a top up WGRS, but they will remain eligible for up to 210 hours of TA. Students in their second year of a major award will be 'grandfathered' so their funding packages do not change from the previous year.

Combined PhD students who are in the professional program component of their degree with *total* funding from scholarships (whether internal (donor) or external, including sponsored international students) that exceeds the minimum funding package of \$23,360 (e.g., doctoral awards from CIHR, SSHRC, NSERC of \$35,000) will not receive GTA funding for the two years in the professional program and will not receive WGRS funding as a substitute. Students in their second year of a major award will be 'grandfathered' so their funding packages do not change from the previous year

PhD students with *total* funding from scholarships (whether internal (donor) or external, including sponsored international students) between \$15,000 and the minimum funding package of \$23,360 will receive a top up WGRS of \$5000 and will be eligible for up to 210 hours of TA.

PhD students with *total* funding from scholarships (whether internal (donor) or external, including sponsored international students) between \$10,000 and \$14,999 will require a

supervisor's contribution of \$2000 per year. These PhD students will also receive a top of WGRS of \$5000 and will be eligible for up to 210 hours of TA.

At the supervisor's request, a supervisor can fund the full \$8000 for one or more PhD students at the outset (so no concerns about grants that may conclude during the course of the students funding). This funding must be issued within the research project start and end dates, while the student is actively enrolled in the PhD program.

For Health Information Sciences (HIS) PhD students, in which case the PhD guaranteed funding package is provided 50:50 by FHS and FIMS, supervisors whose primary Faculty appointment is in FHS are required to contribute \$2,000 annually toward the PhD guaranteed funding package of each HIS PhD student. HIS PhD student supervisors whose primary Faculty appointment is in FIMS will follow FIMS policies relating to graduate student funding.

This policy will be placed on the FHS website and will supersede any prior policies.

Procedures will be provided and shared in the applicable graduate programs.

Schedule 1: Examples of Funding Packages for 2023-2024

* the GTA rate is for 2022-2023. The new rate for 2023-2024 is not known. Any increase in GTA rate will be subtracted from the WGRS.

**Total scholarship values are based on the annual value of the award.

Regular minimum funding package:

210 hours of GTA = \$10,313 *
Supervisor contribution = \$2,000
WGRS = \$11,047
Total: \$23,360

If a student has total scholarships between \$10,000 and \$14,999:

** Scholarship of \$10,000–\$14,999
210 hours of GTA = \$10,313 *
Supervisor contribution = \$2000
WGRS = \$5000
Total: \$27,313 (minimum)– 32,312 (maximum)

If a student has total scholarships between \$15,000 and the minimum funding package:

Scholarship of \$15,000–\$23,359
210 hours of GTA = \$10,313 *
WGRS = \$5000
Total: \$30,313 (minimum, e.g. OGS)– 38,672 (maximum)

If student has a total scholarship above the minimum funding package:

Scholarship of \$23,360 or above
210 hours of GTA = \$10,313 *
Total: 33,673 (minimum) - \$45,313 (typical tri-council award: \$35,000)

If a supervisor wishes to contribute four years of funding for a student at once:

210 hours of GTA = \$10,313 *
Supervisor contribution = \$8,000
WGRS = \$5,047
Total: \$23,360

The Graduate Assistants would note that FHS would cover the \$2000 in the other 3 years through WGRS.

Any top ups from supervisors, in addition to the \$2000 requirement, will increase the funding packages beyond what is stated here.