Frequently Asked Questions: Revision of Policy 50.5

1. What should be included in a standard compensation package for GAs?
   
   Standard compensation packages may include stipend/wages, tuition, health insurance, and fees. However, any items charged to sponsored awards must also be provided to students supported from other sources.

2. Students in my program on TAs are not eligible for GASP support, yet some of them receive partial tuition support from the Graduate School. Can I charge similar “partial tuition support” to my grant?

   Tuition is only an allowable cost if it is consistently provided to all GAs in the program, regardless of the source of funds.

3. Do the standard compensation packages apply to both teaching assistants and research assistants? What about graduate fellowships and internships?

   Yes, although their specific job responsibilities may be different, both teaching assistantships and research assistantships are categorized as graduate assistantships and governed by the same Federal policies regarding allowable costs. Fellowships and internships, however, are categorized differently and are not subject to the same policies regarding tuition remission and other forms of compensation.

4. In the past, we were required to include student fees and health insurance in our sponsored award budgets. If the sponsor allows it, can I include these in my budget?

   These charges are only allowable costs if they are included in the standard compensation package. However, if charges included in the standard compensation package are not allowed by the sponsor (e.g., tuition or health insurance), they cannot be charged to the grant.

5. My existing award includes student fees. Can I use the funds for something else?

   Funds that were originally budgeted for costs that are no longer included in the standard compensation package or that are no longer allowable under the new Policy 50.5 may be re-budgeted for other purposes. Please check with your grants administrator to determine if the sponsor will allow you to shift the funds to another budget line.

6. Will I be able to provide stipend support to my graduate assistant during the 2022-23 academic year?

   During AY2022-2023 and beyond, only students enrolled in graduate programs with established and approved standard compensation packages will be eligible to receive graduate assistant support and compensation from sponsored awards.

7. A local non-profit in Charlotte provides paid internships for students in my program. Are they required to provide the standard compensation package to students participating in the internship?

   Policy 50.5 only applies to graduate assistantships, not other types of graduate student appointments, such as fellowships, traineeships, or internships. The classification of the appointment (GA, fellowship, internship, traineeship, etc.) will depend on the roles and responsibilities of the position and the expectations of the sponsor. In general, a graduate assistantship refers to financial support of enrolled graduate students that results in compensation for work performed. Therefore, a student appointed to a graduate assistantship devotes effort to a combined program of formal study and assigned duties of teaching or research that is designed to enhance and contribute to their graduate education. The compensation received by the graduate assistant is in recognition of these services and the work performed must be necessary to the sponsored award for it to be an allowable expense.
8. Can a program provide different compensation packages to students in the same program? For example, can we offer a larger stipend to doctoral students who have successfully completed their comprehensive exam or defended their thesis proposal?

Yes, programs can establish different pay levels for students based on an established policy that is applied equally to all students enrolled in a program. Additional compensation for students that have completed critical milestones in their academic progression is a good example. However, compensation levels cannot depend on the source of the funds. For example, a GA on a grant cannot receive additional compensation because they are supported on sponsored funds.

9. Does Policy 50.5 apply only to graduate assistants supported on Federal awards?

Like most research institutions, UNC Charlotte applies the federal grants management framework (Uniform Guidance), including administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements to all sponsored awards. This update to Policy 50.5 is intended to align university policy and practice with the Uniform Guidance. It is important to note that federal and non-federal sponsors frequently impose additional restrictions on specific awards that impact the management and administration of funds, including allowable costs.

10. Do the standard compensation packages established by programs apply to both the academic year and summer?

Yes. Programs may have slightly different compensation packages during the summer but the rate of pay for stipends must be equal to what is provided during the academic year. For example, if a program does not regularly provide tuition support to GAs in the summer as part of the standard compensation package, then tuition cannot be charged to an award. However, stipends and wages for work performed during the summer must be paid at the same salary basis as in the academic year.

11. How do I adjust the compensation package for students that are only on a partial GA or are funded from multiple sources?

If GA support is provided from multiple sources or awards, the compensation package, including the tuition costs, must be allocated proportionately to each funding source. Similarly, if the student is on a partial GA, the amount of the compensation package charged to the award must be prorated by the level of effort (e.g., 0.25FTE = ¼ x compensation package).