



Graduate Student Funding Policy

The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) is committed to providing financial support, in the form of a stipend, to all Master of Science (MSc) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students. This stipend may consist of Graduate Fellowships (GF), Teaching Assistant (TA) positions, supervisor-funded Research Assistant (RA) positions and/or other scholarships/fellowships/awards. The following proposed revised policy will apply to new MSc and PhD students. Master of Public Health (MPH) students are not covered under the funding policy.

- 1. Stipends.** The minimum MSc stipend is **\$18,500 per year for two years**. This stipend will normally consist of a *minimum* of \$9,750 per year committed by the student's supervisor in the form of an RA position plus \$8,750 per year committed by FHS in the form of GFs and TA positions.

The minimum PhD stipend is **\$21,000 per year for three years**. This stipend will normally consist of a *minimum* of \$9,750 per year committed by the student's supervisor in the form of an RA position, plus \$11,250 per year committed by FHS in the form of GFs and TA positions.

If the student wins a major scholarship, the minimum FHS and/or supervisor contribution(s) may be reduced by this amount while ensuring that the minimum stipend is still met (see Article 5).

Normally, self-funded graduate students (i.e. those receiving no stipend and not falling into any of the three exceptional categories below) will **not** be admitted to the MSc or PhD program.

Exceptions to the above policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis, as follows:

1.1 A supervisor who does not have any funding is eligible to supervise *one* graduate student (MSc or PhD) without any RA commitment. In this case, this student may apply to receive the total funding amount listed in Article 1, committed by FHS in the form of GFs and TA positions. Such applications will be competitive and subject to availability of funds. If the student is admitted, and the supervisor receives new funding during the student's tenure, the supervisor will be expected to prioritize use of these funds to support the student's stipend, at which time the commitment from FHS will be reduced.

1.2 Students with full-time employment may be admitted to the MSc or PhD program without any funding from FHS or their supervisor. At the time of application, the student must provide a letter from his/her employer outlining the following:

- a) Job title; starting date of the job; annual gross salary
- b) Assurance from the employer that:
 - the applicant's position is continuing,
 - the applicant's proposed research is directly relevant to his/her job at the organization,
 - the applicant is granted necessary time off to take courses and conduct research according to the program requirements, and
 - this time off will not result in a penalty to the applicant's income or job status.

1.3 Students may be considered for admission under alternative funding sources (e.g. employer, industry, or other non-competitive funding). At the time of application, the student must demonstrate that these funds pose no conflict of interest between the funder and the proposed research project. An additional review by FHS' *ad hoc* ethics committee may be required.

1.4 For students admitted to the accelerated Bachelor's/Master's program, the funding policy will apply once the student has completed the Bachelor's degree and is fully admitted to the MSc program. The policy will continue to be applied until completion of the degree program, to a maximum of two years of funding.

- 2. Funding is competitive and contingent on good academic standing.** FHS funding commitments are dependent on availability of funds; the application process is competitive and prospective students requiring FHS funding are not guaranteed admission. Students must normally have a minimum admission GPA of 3.5 in order to receive GF funding. Students who do not meet this requirement will have their GF funding assigned once a minimum 3.5 GPA has been established in the program.
- 3. Timing of application and intake.** Adjudication of applicants requiring FHS funding will take place once per year, in early February. Applicants requiring FHS funding will thus be required to submit their application by the January deadline, for admission to the MSc or PhD program in the Fall (September) intake only. Applicants who have won major scholarships and/or whose stipends are fully committed by their supervisor, or who qualify under Articles 1.2 or 1.3 above, may apply at any time (i.e. off-cycle), for entry the following semester.

4. Graduate stipends: sources of funding

4.1 Research Assistant (RA) Positions are funded by the supervisor's grants, contracts and/or other funds.

4.2 FHS-committed Graduate Fellowships (GF) are merit-based scholarships committed by FHS to a student at admission. These awards are assigned in values of \$6,500 (full GF) or \$3,250 (half GF), to a maximum of \$13,000 in an academic year. These awards represent a multi-year commitment from FHS (2 years for an MSc and 3 years for a PhD) provided that the student maintains a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.5 during their graduate degree. Students falling below this requirement cannot receive GF funding, and will not receive funding from other sources to cover the shortfall. GF funding will resume once the student's GPA increases to 3.5.

4.3 Teaching Assistant (TA) Positions Students awarded TA positions as part of their funding package must still apply for these positions. While FHS will make every effort to prioritize students with TA commitments for TA positions within Health Sciences course offerings, neither positions nor base unit allocations can be guaranteed. Application is competitive and factors such as content knowledge, previous experience, and evaluations will be considered in the assignment of TA positions. Students may supplement their income with extra TAs above their funding commitment, if positions are available.

5. Funding Adjustments.

5.1 Major Scholarships. Eligible students are strongly encouraged to apply for Tri-Council and other major scholarships. If a graduate student receives a major scholarship with an annual value of \$15,000 or above, FHS and/or supervisor commitments may be reduced, in that order, for the duration of the scholarship, while ensuring that the minimum stipend is met. Admission may be determined by the MPC under circumstances exceptional to section 1 of the policy.

5.2 Change of Supervisor. If a graduate student changes supervisor, the student may remain in the program for two terms while searching for a new supervisor. During this period, the MPC Director will serve as the interim supervisor and the student is still eligible for FHS-committed GF and/or TA support, subject to the conditions listed in Articles 4.2 and 4.3. Supervisor provided funding may be discontinued during this period based on consultations between the original supervisor and the MPC. If the student is unable to find a new supervisor after two terms, he/she will be required to withdraw

from the program. If the student finds a new supervisor, the new supervisor is not obligated to commit funding support.

5.3 Supervisor initiated change. For a student that has been registered into the graduate program, if the supervisor initiates a change that results in a student needing a new supervisor, the supervisor will maintain all promised funding to the end of the funding commitment*, unless the new supervisor is willing to assume funding responsibilities. This is contingent on the student maintaining good academic standing in the program as per SFU Graduate General Regulations (section 1.8).

5.4 Program Transfers. For FHS MSc students eligible to transfer internally to the PhD program without completing the MSc, FHS will extend the funding commitment to a total commitment of three years, beginning upon initial enrollment as an MSc student. For FHS MPH students eligible to transfer into the MSc program or students external to FHS eligible to transfer to either the MSc or PhD programs, FHS will consider funding commitments based on the initial date of enrolment into their current graduate program at SFU, in accordance with FHS funding policy. All funding requirements from section 1 of this policy apply and will be confirmed in writing before the transfer request is reviewed by the MPC.

Footnote:

* When the supervisor initiated change (Article 5.3) is a result of the supervisor leaving SFU, the MPC, ADE and/or the Dean will be consulted and funding commitment responsibilities will be determined case-by-case.