

The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Pay for Graduate Employees

Federal salary data shows the dilemma that many graduate employees face: Do I pay for food this month? Or do I pay my medical bills?

In 2018-2019, the average graduate employee (GA) stipend was about \$18,500. (GAs additionally received tuition and fee waivers worth about \$7,500.)

Research assistants earned slightly more, \$19,000, than teaching assistants, \$17,000, while graduate associates earned \$22,000, on average. But within disciplines, pay varied widely from a low of \$14,042 in library science to a high of \$26,968 in health residency programs.

LOW, HIGH, AND AVERAGE STIPEND AND TUITION WAIVER PAID TO GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, BY DISCIPLINE*: 2019-20

| Discipline | Stipend only | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | Average | Low | High | Low - High Difference |
| All Fields | \$18,462 | \$294 | \$78,306 | \$78,012 |
| All Fields, Without Medical | \$18,361 | \$294 | \$78,306 | \$78,012 |
| Residency Programs In Health Industry | \$26,968 | \$5,877 | \$54,820 | \$48,943 |
| Protective Services | \$18,759 | \$8,396 | \$34,000 | \$25,604 |
| Physical Sciences | \$20,528 | \$386 | \$57,260 | \$56,874 |
| Mathematics | \$20,319 | \$1,248 | \$53,967 | \$52,719 |
| Engineering | \$19,407 | \$1,787 | \$60,000 | \$58,213 |
| Biological Sciences/Life Sciences | \$20,853 | \$296 | \$65,440 | \$65,144 |
| Health Professions And Related Sciences | \$20,140 | \$654 | \$54,765 | \$54,111 |
| Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies | \$18,935 | \$676 | \$46,914 | \$46,238 |
| Computer And Information Sciences | \$19,143 | \$1,125 | \$56,000 | \$54,875 |
| Psychology | \$18,066 | \$294 | \$45,760 | \$45,466 |
| Social Sciences And History | \$17,704 | \$2,011 | \$50,124 | \$48,113 |
| English Language And Literature/Letters | \$17,450 | \$1,963 | \$41,333 | \$39,370 |
| Conservation & Renewable Natural Resources | \$17,985 | \$5,200 | \$51,125 | \$45,925 |
| Foreign Languages And Literatures | \$17,526 | \$3,141 | \$45,000 | \$41,859 |
| Business Management & Administrative Services | \$16,977 | \$2,611 | \$58,559 | \$55,948 |
| Philosophy And Religion | \$17,379 | \$6,220 | \$59,112 | \$52,892 |
| Communications | \$16,859 | \$1,095 | \$39,343 | \$38,248 |
| Agricultural Business And Production | \$17,641 | \$5,800 | \$47,222 | \$41,422 |
| Home Economics | \$16,832 | \$2,625 | \$46,667 | \$44,042 |
| Liberal Arts & Sciences, General Studies, & Humanities | \$15,276 | \$3,110 | \$37,000 | \$33,890 |
| Public Administration And Services | \$17,274 | \$2,860 | \$56,556 | \$53,696 |
| History | \$16,596 | \$4,090 | \$34,000 | \$29,910 |
| Education | \$16,288 | \$900 | \$78,306 | \$77,406 |
| Parks, Recreation, Leisure, & Fitness Studies | \$16,454 | \$377 | \$44,790 | \$44,413 |
| Engineering-Related Technologies | \$15,226 | \$3,750 | \$26,200 | \$22,450 |
| Area, Ethnic, And Cultural Studies | \$15,661 | \$4,500 | \$33,200 | \$28,700 |
| Visual And Performing Arts | \$14,289 | \$1,400 | \$46,667 | \$45,267 |
| Architecture And Related Programs | \$13,152 | \$864 | \$40,900 | \$40,036 |
| Law And Legal Studies | \$13,678 | \$1,250 | \$38,835 | \$37,585 |
| Library Science | \$14,042 | \$2,454 | \$36,027 | \$33,573 |

*Sorted by Average Stipend + Tuition Waiver.

Source: ASA Research analysis of Oklahoma State University, Graduate Assistant Stipend Survey, 2019-20.