

Anticipated Changes in Graduate Assistantship Appointments

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Graduate Assistantship Appointments

- Campus leadership has appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Graduate Assistantships to develop a **new rate-based method** for graduate assistant appointments with the overarching goals of
 - harmonizing graduate assistantship appointments between RA, TA and PA,
 - allowing for market-informed compensation,
 - providing more consistency with national standards of operation, and
 - reducing the confusion faced by prospective students in the recruiting process.
- The goal is to implement the new method on July 1, 2016.



Graduate Assistantship Appointments

- This new method will likely include the following features:
 - Maintenance of the current categories of graduate assistants: RA, TA and PA
 - A minimum rate to be set centrally with an annual review/decision process
 - A cap on the total of all assistant appointments for an individual at 50% (with very rare exceptions)
 - Tuition remission and benefits for all graduate assistant appointments at or above 33%
 - Appointment percentage directly tied to hours
 - A cost neutral implementation, that will also allow for the flexibility to accommodate different market factors faced by programs/departments



Our Current System

- UW-Madison sets a single rate for a 100% RA appointment and units adjust the appointment percentage to achieve the pay rate they desire.
- For TA/PA appointments the percentage is directly tied to hours of work
- A percentage at or above 33.3% produces eligibility for tuition remission and health insurance.
- Adjusting the percentage is the only mechanism that programs currently have to provide a market-driven salary.
- Parity now achieved between RA and Senior TA for same percentage and duration of appointment



Peer Institution Systems

- Rather than setting an individual's pay by adjusting the percentage, peer institutions primarily use a range of rates so that an appointment can be competitive and consistent with market factors in the field.



Cost Neutral Implementation

- Converting between the current method and a new alternative could be done in a cost-neutral way that would allow individuals to be paid the same unless the unit decides to modify the rate within the allowable range
 - Assume that we set the minimum assistantship rate at the current standard TA rate
 - 33% 9mo. TA paid \$10,027 → 33% 9mo. TA paid \$10,027 (at min)
 - 62% 9mo. RA paid \$21,532 → 50% 9mo. RA paid \$21,532 (above min)



Next Steps

- Identification of best practices used by peer institutions which would have applicability in alignment with our campus culture
- Development and implementation of a consultation and communication plan with key campus stakeholders
- Determination of the additional features needed in addition to the above requirements
- Identification of all business processes that will be impacted
- Creation of an implementation plan which includes training needs



Open Questions

- How can we ensure that a student's pursuit of their thesis/dissertation research/scholarship is not limited?
- In addition to a minimum rate, should a maximum rate be set?
- How will the "unit" be determined for setting rates?
- Will the unit be required to maintain parity between TA, PA and RA pay?
- Can different levels of rate be defined by a unit based on experience or duties (e.g. standard vs senior, and/or higher rates allowed for coordinating/managing duties)?
- Can we allow up to 100% appointments in summer session?
- How will hours of work be accounted for?

