MEMO

DATE: July 17, 2020 (Updated 11/12/20)  
TO: Graduate Coordinators, Department Heads, Deans & Associate Deans  
FROM: Jim Ahern, AVP for Graduate Education  
RE: AY 2020-2021 Graduate Tuition & Fees Fellowship program for international graduate students; employment of overseas international students

Travel restrictions and visa processing delays related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic will likely have significant impacts on UW’s international graduate students. Many new and continuing international graduate students will be unable to come to campus for part or all of the AY 2020-2021. In an effort to help these students achieve their dreams of starting or continuing their graduate degrees at UW, the Office of Graduate Education is pleased to announce the temporary Graduate Tuition & Fees Fellowship (GTFF) Program. This program is intended to provide tuition & fee funding for international graduate students who were to be hired as graduate assistants for AY 2020-2021 but are unable to be graduate assistants because they are unable to enter the U.S.

Funding sources for the temporary Graduate Tuition & Fees Fellowships
Funding for GTFF awards may come from departmental/college sources (e.g., unrestricted, restricted, Foundation, grants, contracts) or may be requested from the Office of Graduate Education (OGE). If it is possible to use the student’s original GA funding source to fund tuition and fees (without the GA work expectation), this source should be used. Only if such a source is not available, use of OGE GTFF funding will be considered. Please indicate in the attached form the intended source of tuition and fee funding.

Temporary modification to the Graduate Fellowships & Assistantships SAPP
Interim Provost Alexander has granted a temporary modification to the Graduate Fellowships & Assistantships policy that facilitates the creation of graduate fellowships that fund only a student’s tuition & fees. This modification is solely to support the temporary GTFF program for international graduate students, and the exception is only valid through FY21. Prior to this temporary modification, graduate fellowships had to provide a stipend award at least equivalent to half of a full graduate assistantship stipend. Under the temporary modification, the GTFF program provides tuition at the resident rate and fees but no stipend is provided (and no GA work may be expected).

Eligibility criteria:

- Student is an international graduate student.

- Student is unable to enter the U.S. and come to campus due to circumstances beyond the student’s control (e.g., governmental travel restrictions, visa delays, etc.). An explanation of the student’s circumstances, accompanied by any documentation (if
available), must be provided.

- Student had been promised and had accepted graduate assistantship funding for the Fall 2020 semester. Copies of the offer letter and the student’s acceptance must be provided.

- The student is not able to fulfill the GA duties or cannot be hired as a GA while overseas and away from campus. An explanation must be provided of why the GA-ship duties can only be fulfilled on campus/in the U.S.A. and/or an explanation of why the student cannot be hired and paid as a GA while overseas. Possible reasons for the latter include: a) the duties of the GA-ship are such that they cannot be performed remotely, b) the student does not have an active SEVIS record or their SEVIS record will be terminated because they are unable to meet the F1 status requirement, or c) other governmental restrictions on such employment (by the U.S. or home country).

Other GTFF restrictions:

- If the student meets the above eligibility criteria, the maximum Graduate Tuition & Fee Fellowship that may be awarded shall be equivalent to the promised T&F coverage as given in the student’s GA offer letter. E.g., if a student was offered and accepted a full GA-ship, then their GTFF award would cover up to 9 credit hours of tuition & fees. If a student was offered and accepted a half GA-ship, then their GTFF award would cover up to 5 credit hours of tuition & fees.

- GTFF awardees are not eligible for UW’s student health insurance as long as they remain overseas and away from UW’s campus. Please contact the Office of Risk Management with any questions about student health insurance eligibility.

Employment as a graduate assistant while the student is overseas
Only some international graduate students located overseas are eligible to be hired and paid as true graduate assistants while they are out of the U.S. If the student was previously employed at UW as a graduate assistant and holds and maintains a valid F1 visa\(^1\), they may be eligible for being employed as a graduate assistant while located overseas, on a temporary basis. Please consult with the UW Tax Office (tax@uwyo.edu, 766-2821) in order to obtain the appropriate tax liability for any students who can be hired while they are overseas. Consultation with UW Legal (766-4997) may also be necessary if the student is a citizen of or is located in a country embargoed by the U.S.

Employment as an independent contractor while the student is overseas
For a very limited number of students who are not eligible to be hired/paid as graduate assistants while they are located overseas, it may be possible to employ them as independent contractors. If the student was promised and had accepted a UW GA-ship, any employment as an independent contractor must be in addition to a GTFF funding award equivalent to the tuition & fee amount originally offered. Although overseas students who were not promised or accepted GA funding may be employed as independent contractors without an appropriate GTFF award, programs are strongly encouraged to arrange GTFF awards for such students.

\(^1\)Although F1 visa holders who left the U.S. and continued learning online in Spring 2020 were allowed to keep their F1 status, it is currently not clear if such students will be allowed to maintain their F1 status if they are unable or choose not to enter the U.S. and attend on campus classes in the Fall 2020 semester. We anticipate that ISS will be able to provide clarification on this matter in the coming weeks.
whenever possible. Please note that, budgetarily, independent contractors are paid as “Professional Services” not from the GA stipends budget. Any unbudgeted transfer between expenditure classifications requires presidential approval and may not exceed 10% of the Org’s or Division’s Total Expenses budget or $100,000, whichever is less without Board of Trustees approval (UW Regulation 7-1). Once the GTFF/IC request is approved, Michele Peck (mpeck@uwyo.edu) will contact you before proceeding further. Michele will work with Human Resources and others to help facilitate these hires. Do not submit a Graduate Assistant requisition for any student to be hired via the independent contractor route.

Crucially, please direct the student to investigate any local legal or tax implications of being employed by UW while they are located outside of the U.S. UW Legal, ISS and the UW Tax Office are not able to provide information on the legal and tax implications for countries other than the U.S.

How to apply for the GTFF program
If a graduate program would like to request authorization to self-fund or request OGE funding for a Graduate Tuition & Fees Fellowship, please complete the attached form and submit via email to GradEd@uwyo.edu. The target date for submission is January 5, 2021. Forms submitted after this date will be considered as time and resources allow. Prior to submission, I recommend that you consult with the following as needed in order to assess a student’s eligibility:

- The UW Tax Office (766-2821) regarding the tax implications for international students who will be employed while overseas.
- UW Legal (766-4997) regarding any relevant import/export regulations related to making a GTFF award and especially if you intend to employ a student as a GA or an independent contractor to fulfill duties while overseas.
AY 2020-2021 Graduate Tuition & Fees Fellowship for International Students
Request Form
Please convert this completed page and all attached documents into a single PDF

Graduate student’s name (last name, first):

W #:

Continuing or New (mark one)

Degree Program Name

Degree Level: Master’s or PhD (mark one)

Advisor’s Name:

Name of person completing form (should be program’s graduate coordinator, director or department head):

1) Intended funding source for the GTFF award. What funding will be used to pay for the student’s tuition and fees for the AY 2020-2021 semester? If requesting OGE GTFF funding and the student was not to be supported by base-GTA funding, please explain why the original GA funding source cannot be used to fund the GTFF award.

2) Please provide a brief explanation of why the student is unable to enter the United States and come to campus. (attach any supporting documentation, if available).

3) Please attach the program’s offer letter to the student in which graduate assistantship funding was offered. Please also attach written acceptance of this GA funding offer by the student. Both documents must be dated.

4) Level of original GA offer: half (10 hrs/week), ¾ (15 hrs/week), or full (20 hrs/week) (mark one)

5) Please explain why the student cannot be hired & employed as a regular graduate assistant while they are located overseas. Provide any documentation, if available.

6) Does the program intend to hire the student as an independent contractor in order to fulfill GA duties while the student is overseas? If so, please indicate the funding source and confirm that the Dean’s Office has approved any FY21 budgetary deviation necessary.

Please submit this form and any supporting documentation as a single PDF to GradEd@uwyo.edu.