



NSF GRFP: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Administrative guidance for new and continuing NSF GRFP fellows

Georgia Institute of Technology
Office of Graduate Education

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How to Use This FAQ

This FAQ organizes NSF GRFP guidance alongside Georgia Tech local process notes. It supplements, and does not replace, the NSF GRFP Administrative Guide and Research.gov.

Confirm your individual circumstances with the Graduate Fellowships Office at fellowships@grad.gatech.edu before making any status, employment, leave, or program change.

1. Program Overview and Eligibility

1. What is the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)?

The NSF GRFP supports eligible graduate students pursuing research-based master's or doctoral degrees in eligible STEM or STEM education fields. At Georgia Tech, fellows select Georgia Tech Research Corporation in Research.gov when identifying the institution.

2. What eligibility requirements should fellows keep in mind?

- Be a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident.
- Be enrolled or intend to enroll in a research-based master's or doctoral degree program in an eligible STEM or STEM education field.
- Maintain full-time enrollment, satisfactory academic progress, a GPA of 3.0 or above, and Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) requirements.
- Submit the required Annual Activities Report and declare status each spring.

3. Can I change my Major Field of Study?

During the first fellowship year, fellows must follow the Major Field of Study listed in the application's disciplinary degree program. After completing the first year, fellows may switch their Major Field of Study and/or eligible STEM degree program if the new program remains consistent with NSF GRFP eligibility requirements.

2. Fellowship Status, Tenure, Reserve, Forfeit, and Status Changes

4. What does “On Tenure” mean?

On Tenure means the fellow is enrolled full-time in an eligible degree-granting program and is receiving the NSF GRFP stipend.

5. What does “On Reserve” mean?

On Reserve means the fellow is enrolled full-time in an eligible degree-granting program but is not receiving NSF GRFP stipend support during that fellowship year. Fellows can use Reserve to pursue GRA, GTA, or other fellowship funding.

6. How long do I have to use my GRFP funding?

Fellows have five years to use three years of Tenure funding. Reserve status is declared for an entire fellowship year rather than part of a year. The fellowship academic year runs from August 1 through July 31.

7. What is Forfeit status?

Forfeit status is used during an On Tenure year when the fellow participates in an activity that is not permitted while receiving NSF stipend support, such as accepting certain federal salary or a GRA/GTA appointment. Forfeited stipend months are lost and not recoverable.

8. What is a Fellowship Status Change Request?

A Fellowship Status Change Request is submitted in Research.gov when a fellow needs to change status, such as moving into Forfeit status or returning to Tenure after a forfeit period.

- Log in to research.gov.
- Select “Request Fellowship Status Change.”
- Choose the appropriate fellowship year.
- Select the new status, such as Forfeit or Tenure.
- Enter the requested dates and information.

Note

Submit status change requests before the effective date whenever possible so stipend processing and fellowship records remain accurate.

3. Payroll, Compensation, Appointments, and Income Verification

9. What is the NSF GRFP stipend amount?

The NSF GRFP stipend is \$37,000 for 12 months, paid at a monthly rate of \$3,083.

10. When are GRFP stipend payments made?

At Georgia Tech, stipend payments are processed by the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid and deposited into fellows' Banner accounts at the end of each month. Fellows should consult the current Georgia Tech stipend payment dates for specific disbursement dates.

11. How do I receive direct deposit?

Direct deposits are processed through eRefund and sent to a U.S. bank account. Funds may be deposited into either checking or savings, but not both, and cannot be deposited into money market checking accounts.

- Log in to the Student Payment Portal using your GT Account and password.
- Open the Refunds tab.
- Select "Set Up Account."
- Enter bank routing and account information.
- Continue and submit the setup.

12. Should my GRA appointment end before my fellowship begins?

For a fellow moving from a GRA appointment to GRFP Tenure funding on August 1, end the GRA appointment effective July 31 so the fellowship can begin August 1 without overlapping the GRA appointment and the GRFP stipend.

13. Can I hold a GRA/GTA appointment while On Tenure?

No. NSF GRFP fellows may not be On Tenure and hold a GRA/GTA appointment simultaneously. A fellow who wants to pursue a GRA/GTA must either declare On Reserve before the fellowship year begins or declare Forfeit status before the assistantship.

14. Can my department supplement the difference between the NSF stipend and the department standard stipend?

Georgia Tech reimburses any difference between the department's standard stipend and the NSF stipend. Implementation should be coordinated through the department, the Graduate Fellowships Office, and payroll/financial administrators.

15. Can a department hire me in a supplemental role?

NSF GRFP fellows may work up to 10 hours per week while On Tenure only if the work meets the restrictions described in the guidance. Work cannot be that of a GRA/GTA, cannot relate to the fellow's research, and cannot be considered "in service" of the Institute. Examples of non-allowable work include grader, proctor, or lab assistant roles.

A one-time exception allows a department to hire a fellow as a Graduate Assistant (GA) for only one semester, with a monthly stipend and not as a GTA. A tuition waiver should not be placed on the student record.

Note

Fellows considering any form of work while On Tenure should contact fellowships@grad.gatech.edu before accepting the role.

16. Can my department hire or designate me as an affiliate to maintain Georgia Tech resource access?

Yes. Departments may designate or hire a GRFP fellow as an affiliate when needed to maintain access to Georgia Tech resources after a GRA appointment ends. The department manages the specific affiliate process.

17. How can I verify income when leasing an apartment?

Because GRFP support is a fellowship stipend rather than a traditional assistantship appointment, fellows may need to provide alternative income documentation to leasing offices.

- NSF GRFP award letter.
- Georgia Tech fellowship appointment or support letter.
- Documentation of the annual stipend and monthly payment amount.
- Fellowship payment schedule or stipend disbursement information.
- A verification letter from the Graduate Fellowships Office, if needed.

Note

If a leasing office asks for employment verification, explain that the support is fellowship funding and provide fellowship income documentation instead.

4. Academic Program Changes, Advisors, and Degree Completion

18. Can I change advisors while I am an NSF GRFP fellow?

Yes. Switching advisors does not by itself change GRFP funding, provided the fellow remains eligible, enrolled in an appropriate research-based program, and making satisfactory academic progress.

- Follow department procedures for changing advisors.
- Update institutional records that identify the advisor.
- Ensure future AARs are reviewed by the appropriate advisor or, if an advisor is unavailable, by the CO when permitted.

19. What if I do not have an advisor during the AAR certification period?

If an advisor is unavailable, has departed, or a fellow is between advisors, the Coordinating Official (CO) may sign the Annual Activities Report in lieu of an advisor when appropriate.

20. Can I change majors or departments at Georgia Tech?

Yes, a major or department change may be allowed if the new department or program still falls under the GRFP Major Field of Study selected for the award and remains an eligible research-based graduate program.

Note

Consult the Graduate Fellowships Office before processing the change, especially if the new program is in a substantially different field.

21. What program changes are generally allowed?

- Research program to research program within the NSF GRFP award field.
- Department change within the same GRFP-supported field.
- Advisor change or research group/lab change.
- Interdisciplinary research shift that remains within the awarded field.
- Ph.D. program to research-based master's-only program.

22. Can I change from a Ph.D. program to a master's-only program?

Yes. Changing from a Ph.D. program to a master's-only program is allowed if the master's program remains an eligible research-based graduate program and remains aligned with the GRFP award field.

23. What should I do after completing a master's degree?

After the master's degree is completed, submit the AAR and include the degree completion date. Also report publications, presentations, outreach, and other fellowship-related accomplishments as applicable.

24. What program changes are not allowed?

Fellows may not change from a research/thesis-based graduate program to a professional, course-only, or non-research program. The fellowship is intended to support research-based graduate study.

- Research/thesis-based program to professional/non-thesis program.

- On-campus research program to a fully online program.
- Research master's or Ph.D. to course-only degree path.
- Eligible NSF field to an ineligible field.
- Degree-seeking status to non-degree status.
- Any change that removes the research component that formed the basis of the GRFP award.

5. Enrollment, Employment, and Internships

25. What enrollment level is required?

Funds will only be disbursed if fellows are registered full-time, including during summer. Full-time enrollment for graduate students is 12 hours every semester. During fall and spring, 9 of the 12 hours must be letter grade or pass/fail credit. During summer, 6 of the 12 hours must be letter grade or pass/fail credit. Thesis research hours count as graded hours.

26. Can I participate in a non-federal internship while On Tenure?

Yes. A non-federal internship can be compatible with On Tenure status if the activity supports training and follows applicable limits and approvals. No NSF approval is needed for a standard external internship if the fellow remains enrolled full-time, continues making satisfactory academic progress, and completes the AAR as usual.

Enrollment still governs your stipend. If you drop below the minimum credit-bearing hours for a semester, you are not eligible for the stipend that semester even though the internship is non-federal. See Question 29.

27. Can I participate in a federally funded internship while On Tenure?

Yes, but if the internship is funded by a U.S. federal agency or federally funded program and the fellow accepts federal salary or stipend during the same period, the fellow must forfeit the GRFP stipend for those months. NSF does not allow dual federal support.

28. What should I provide to have an internship approved?

The Coordinating Official needs a copy of the offer letter and a letter of support from the advisor on Georgia Tech letterhead.

29. Do I need to register my internship?

It depends on your enrollment. There are two paths, described in full in the Georgia Tech Internship Guide for GRFP Fellows (Section 9).

Path	Enrollment	Registration & Stipend
Path 1 — Maintain 12 credit-bearing hours	At least 12 credit-bearing hours (graded or pass/fail). Thesis/research hours (7000/9000) count.	Career Center registration not required. Stipend continues, unless the internship is federally funded (see Question 27).
Path 2 — Register the internship	12 total hours: minimum 9 graded/pass-fail (fall/spring) or 6 (summer), with INTN audit hours filling the remainder.	Register through the Graduate Internship Program, which enrolls you in the tuition-free, non-credit INTN audit course. Stipend forfeited for that semester.

Note

Internships located outside the United States must also be registered through the Office of International Education via ATLAS, regardless of which path you choose.

30. What if I am On Reserve and take an internship?

If the fellow is On Reserve, no action with NSF is required for an internship. Georgia Tech registration steps still apply.

6. Medical and Military Leave

31. Can NSF GRFP fellows take medical leave?

Yes. Medical Leave must be requested in monthly increments, up to a maximum of 24 months.

32. Is paid medical leave available?

Yes. NSF support provides up to three months of paid medical leave for qualified medical or dependent-care needs, subject to pre-approval by the Coordinating Official.

33. Are medical leave months forfeited?

No. The unused, deferred months of Tenure or Reserve are available for use later, extending beyond the standard five-year limit. These months are deferred rather than forfeited.

34. What reporting is required while on Medical Leave?

Fellows in Medical Leave status must submit an AAR stating they are on medical leave. Medical Leave must be renewed if it extends into a new fellowship year.

35. How does Military Leave work?

Military Leave is for fellows who must interrupt graduate study for active duty in U.S. military service. While on Military Leave, the fellowship clock stops and remaining Tenure or Reserve periods are not affected.

- Request Military Leave through the GRFP Online Module.
- Submit a copy of duty orders to the CO at the awardee institution.
- Submit an AAR stating Military Leave status and declare fellowship status annually.
- Renew Military Leave if it extends into a new fellowship year.

7. Annual Activities Report (AAR), IDP, and Reporting

36. What is the Annual Activities Report (AAR)?

The AAR is the annual NSF GRFP report documenting fellowship activities and status. Fellows must submit the Activities Report to Georgia Tech and declare status for the following fellowship year each spring.

37. What should I include in my AAR?

- Research accomplishments and progress.
- Publications, presentations, creative works, or other scholarly products.
- Internships and professional development activities.
- Broader impacts or outreach activities.
- Degree completion information, if graduating or completing a master's degree.
- Leave status, if on Medical Leave or Military Leave.

38. Who signs or certifies my AAR?

Fellows should include a signed Faculty Advisor Form with their submission. If a fellow does not have an advisor or the advisor is unavailable, the CO may sign in lieu of an advisor when appropriate.

39. What is the IDP requirement?

The AAR requires the advisor to certify that an Individual Development Plan (IDP) is established and reviewed each year.

40. What should graduating fellows do in Research.gov?

Fellows who are graduating should wait until they are within 30 days of graduating to log in to research.gov and update fellowship status for the current fellowship year to “complete with degree.”

8. Grant Number, Publications, and Acknowledgements

41. What is the Georgia Tech NSF GRFP grant number?

The Georgia Tech NSF GRFP grant number is DGE-2545526, valid from 09/01/2025 to 08/31/2030.

42. Do publications and presentations need to acknowledge NSF GRFP support?

Yes. All publications, presentations, and creative works based on activities conducted during the fellowship must acknowledge NSF GRFP support.

43. What acknowledgement statement should I use?

Use the following statement:

This material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program under Grant No. DGE-2545526. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

44. Where should I include the acknowledgement?

- Journal articles and manuscripts.
- Conference papers, posters, and presentations.
- Theses and dissertations.
- Creative works and other scholarly products based on fellowship-supported activities.

9. Contacts and Resources

45. Who are the key Georgia Tech contacts?

Contact	Use For
Dr. Bonnie Ferri Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Education	Georgia Tech NSF GRFP Principal Investigator
Camile E. Matthews Graduate Fellowships Manager fellowships@grad.gatech.edu	Coordinating Official (CO): fellowship status, stipend, compliance, forfeit requests, offer letter review
Office of the Bursar Fellowships Accountant fellowship.ask@gatech.edu	Fellowship payment posting and student account questions
Financial Aid grad@finaid.gatech.edu	Stipend disbursement and financial aid records
Bursar — Direct Deposit bursar.ask@business.gatech.edu (404) 894-4618	eRefund setup and direct deposit questions

46. Where can fellows find additional guidance?

- NSF GRFP Administrative Guide for Fellows.
- NSF GRFP Frequently Asked Questions.
- NSF GRFP Module in Research.gov.
- Georgia Tech Registrar calendar and registration timelines.
- Georgia Tech RCR resources.
- Georgia Tech Internship Guide for GRFP Fellows.
- Georgia Tech Career Center internship registration guidance: career.gatech.edu.

10. Quick Checklists

Starting NSF GRFP Tenure Funding

- ☐ Declare On Tenure in Research.gov for the fellowship year
- ☐ Register full-time as early as possible each semester
- ☐ Complete required RCR training by the applicable deadlines
- ☐ Set up direct deposit/eRefund in the Student Payment Portal
- ☐ If transitioning from GRA funding, coordinate the appointment end date before the fellowship start date
- ☐ Confirm any supplemental funding or affiliate access arrangements with the department

Before Changing Program, Major, or Advisor

- ☐ Confirm the new program remains research-based and degree-seeking
- ☐ Confirm the new program remains within the NSF GRFP award field, especially during the first fellowship year
- ☐ Consult the advisor, graduate coordinator, department, and Graduate Fellowships Office
- ☐ Update institutional advisor/program records
- ☐ Plan AAR certification, including CO certification if an advisor is unavailable

Medical Leave Request

- ☐ Contact the Graduate Fellowships Office and CO before the leave begins when possible
- ☐ Request leave in monthly increments
- ☐ Confirm whether paid medical leave applies; paid leave is limited to up to three months
- ☐ Track deferred months, which are available for later use rather than forfeited
- ☐ Submit the AAR stating Medical Leave status and renew the leave if it extends into a new fellowship year

Your Primary Contact

Graduate Fellowships Manager

Camile E. Matthews

fellowships@grad.gatech.edu

When in doubt, contact the Graduate Fellowships Manager before making a status, employment, leave, or program change.