

Graduate Research Fellowship

Policies & Procedures for Budget Changes

The purpose of the Graduate Research Fellowship is to support exceptional students who are engaged in research that furthers the goals of Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) by providing resources for their academic expenses, as well as research and outreach support. We want the fellowship to provide professional support and flexibility. As such, VASG is committed to working closely with our fellows to implement allowable budgetary adjustments throughout the fellowship.

We encourage you to contact VASG with any budget questions. In addition, your home institution's sponsored programs/research office will need to be involved in any significant budget modifications.

CHANGES TO TIMING OF SPENDING

Fellowship funds can be carried over from one year to the next without prior approval (e.g., if you have a two year fellowship, you can reserve some of your year 1 budgeted funds and spend them in year 2). However, you cannot move funds forward (e.g., funds in the year 2 budget cannot be spent in year 1).

Fellows can request a no-cost extension – up to one year, with reasonable justification¹. In other words, funds from your fellowship may be available up to one year after the original end date of your award. If you are considering a no-cost extension, please note:

1. Extensions must be requested BEFORE the end of the award (at least 2 months in advance) and should be coordinated with your institution's sponsored programs/research office. If you know in advance that a no-cost extension will be requested (e.g., you receive additional support that will cover some of your budgeted costs), we encourage you to contact VASG at that time.
2. Formal requests must be submitted by your institution, and should briefly discuss the reason for the no-cost extension, indicate if a budget modification will be necessary, and include a new proposed end date. You will receive written approval and a modified award notification/sub-recipient agreement.
3. If those funds are being used within the same budget line item(s), no additional paperwork is required (e.g., if tuition funds are available from another source during your fellowship, then your tuition funds may be held over and used during the no-cost extension period). However, if you wish to transfer funds between budget line items (e.g., if you wish to use tuition funds for travel), you may need to request a budget modification (see below). There may be indirect costs and match ramifications for some budget changes, so please inform VASG as soon as possible.
4. In general, VASG will only grant a single no-cost extension for up to one year in duration, so please plan accordingly.

¹ There are some exceptions to this rule, particularly at the end of the Virginia Sea Grant award from NOAA. VASG will endeavor to keep all fellows fully informed of these potential restrictions, and work with you to adjust budgets where possible.

In Collaboration With



MOVING FUNDS BETWEEN BUDGET LINE ITEMS

If you wish to transfer funds from one budget line item to another (e.g., use tuition funds for travel):

1. Any changes that amount to less than 10% of the total budget do not require prior VASG approval. *However, we encourage you to inform us of any changes to your budget.*
2. If the amount is more than 10% of the total budget you are **REQUIRED** to get prior approval, including a revised budget and justification. Fellows are encouraged to contact VASG with questions and for guidance. Budget revisions must be coordinated through your institution's sponsored programs/research office. In general, these changes will be approved only if:
 - a. The funds will be used in direct support of the fellow's activities.
 - b. The funds will be used for research/outreach as proposed in the application.
 - c. The funds will be used while the fellow is still a student on campus or within 6 months of graduation (see below).

GRADUATION

Fellowship funds are intended to support the academic expenses (i.e., tuition, stipend, benefits, and relevant research, outreach, and professional development activities) of the fellow while s/he is seeking a graduate degree at a Virginia institution for their proposed research and outreach. Budget modifications will be approved if the fellow remains a graduate student in good standing at his/her academic institution. We encourage all of our fellows to share important milestones with us, including defense and graduation dates.

Fellows who graduate before the end date of their award may request up to \$2,500 to communicate the results of their research and/or outreach activities (for example a conference presentation, publication costs) for up to six months after graduation. Fellows should notify VASG two months in advance if they plan to use fellowship funds after graduation.

OTHER TYPES OF BUDGET MODIFICATIONS

VASG will entertain all allowable budget modifications, within the constraints of our NOAA award and NOAA/VASG policies, as long as they are consistent with the intent of the fellowship.

FEDERAL FUNDING AND AWARD NOTIFICATIONS

Funding for the Graduate Research Fellowship are contingent on available federal funds from NOAA and the National Sea Grant College Program. Throughout the award, VASG will work closely with each institution's sponsored programs/research office to process award documentation.

ENSURING THE GREATEST IMPACT FOR FELLOWS AND FELLOWSHIP FUNDS

VASG monitors spend rates closely on all of its awards. If it appears that there are surplus funds in an award that will not be needed or spent by the fellow's end date, and if there is no clear spending plan for remaining funds at the end of the award, we may seek to return unneeded funds to VASG so that they may be reallocated to other needs, including other research and fellow activities.