

- The RAS form is used to request a scholarship for students supported as research assistants who meet the eligibility requirements listed below.
- Do not use Research Assistant Scholarship (RAS) forms for students at 503 registration.
- The RAS is intended for PhD students; do not use for MS students.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT SCHOLARSHIP (RAS) Form Instructions & FAQ

The Research Assistant Scholarship (RAS) is a program of support for graduate students who are paid as research assistants on sponsored projects. To activate an RAS award, a Research Assistant Scholarship form, along with copies of the Payroll Appointment Form, the Position Data Form, and a copy of the GDES screen (any account established prior to August 15, 2008) or a copy of the GM045 – Sponsored Project Budget Statement from Cognos, must be completed and submitted to Accounting Services for Research & Sponsored Programs (ASRSP) for approval. ASRSP will forward approved RAS materials to The Graduate School.

Eligibility requirements for the RAS program are:

1. The sponsored project must carry the full on-campus or off-campus indirect or Facility and Administration (F&A) rate. For those projects that have the on-campus rate the rate must be greater than or equal to 47%. (Rates will be higher for new accounts). For those projects that have the off-campus rate the rate must be greater than or equal to 26%.
2. Stipend and tuition must be paid proportionately from the sponsored project(s). For example, if 2 projects are supporting a student equally, then 50% of the stipend and 50% of the tuition payment must be paid from each project.
3. University policy requires that all students receiving an RAS be enrolled full time in The Graduate School, either at 3-4 graduate units or 588, 598 or 599. *Please check that students have registered appropriately.* (For 599 registration, make certain the student has already completed 9 full-time quarters exclusive of previous 588 and/or 598 registration.)
4. Students must maintain good academic standing.
5. Students on an extension of the deadline for completion of all PhD requirements are **not** eligible for the RAS.
6. Students supported by research assistantships in the summer must be registered full-time during the summer quarter.
7. Students must adhere to all regulations stipulated in *The Graduate School Policy Guide*, available on the web at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/abouttgs/policyguide>.

RAS Minimum Stipend Level and Scholarship Amounts for 2008/2009

Registration	required minimum stipend	Tuition per quarter	RAS tuition portion	Sponsored project tuition portion
3-4 units	\$1,728/month	\$12,252	\$8,944/quarter	\$3,308/quarter
588, 598, 599	\$1,728/month	\$4,084	\$817/quarter	\$3,267/quarter
503	MUST USE STUDENT AID INFORMATION FORM (SAIF)			

The RAS may be requested for more than one quarter as long as the Appointment Form and Position Data Form submitted cover the quarters requested. For example, if you request the RAS for three quarters, then the Appointment Form and Position Data Form must cover the entire time period. **A separate RAS form must be submitted for any quarter in which the sponsored NU Financials chart string changes.**

Pay Periods for RA Stipend and RAS Quarterly Payments	
Fall Quarter	09/1 – 11/30
Winter Quarter	12/1 – 02/28
Spring Quarter	03/1 – 05/31
Summer Quarter	06/1 – 08/31

If you have questions, please contact Mike Fernandez in The Graduate School at 847/491-7334 or m-fernandez@northwestern.edu.

Additional Information on RAS and Sponsored Chart strings:

- The Principal Investigator (PI) listed on the form must match the PI on the Sponsored Project Budget Statement.
- The sponsored chart string must be open for the term of the RAS/SAIF request.
- Any student paid on expense account 60076 is required to report effort.
- The PI listed for the chart string must certify effort for all RAs on the grant.
- Expense Accounts 60076 (stipend), 60182 (fringe), and 78020 (tuition) must all be open for the RAS form to be approved.

Frequently Asked Questions for RAS

Where do I obtain the information for the project period and the Facility and Administration (F&A) rates?

For accounts established prior to August 15, 2008 you must submit a copy of GDES screen. For accounts established as of or after that date you must submit a copy of the GM045 – Sponsored Project Budget Statement found in Cognos. The GDES screen will be accepted for the first three to six months of 2008/2009 fiscal year. After that only the GM045 will be accepted.

Where do I find the Appointment & Position Data Forms?

The Appointment & Position Data Forms are posted on the human resources site for Northwestern:
<http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/payroll/administratorpayments.html>.

If a student is being paid from a combination of RAS-eligible sponsored chart strings, how should tuition be distributed?

The tuition must come from the sponsored chart strings proportionately. For example, if 2 projects are supporting a student equally, then 50% of the stipend and 50 % of the tuition payment must be paid from each.

If a student is being paid from a combination of an RAS-eligible sponsored and a non-eligible sponsored or departmental chart string (for instance, \$1,500 from an eligible sponsored chart string and \$186 from a departmental chart string) can tuition be proportionately charged directly to the chart strings?

In this case, the projects are not eligible for an RAS, and thus the distribution of the tuition is not relevant. Use the SAIF for both chart strings. If you must split the cost between a sponsored project and a non-sponsored project, contact the Assistant Dean of Financial Aid, Pat Mann, in TGS for assistance.

If a sponsored project starts in July, is it permissible for the PI to double pay the student for June and July in the July paycheck and be eligible for an RAS?

No—this is not acceptable. The program should work with their school dean and the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) to establish pre-spending authority in order for the student to be eligible for an RAS. If this is not possible, please contact TGS Assistant Dean of Financial Aid, Pat Mann, at p-mann@northwestern.edu, for assistance.

Does the student pay tax on or have to declare on tax returns the portion of tuition assistance applied against the sponsored chart string?

Because this tuition assistance takes the form of a scholarship, the portion of tuition assistance charged to a project on behalf of the student is not taxable according to current IRS regulations.

Can I use the RAS for students at 503 registration? No. If the student is registered for 503, you must use the Student Aid Information Form (SAIF).

How do I revise or cancel a previously submitted RAS request? There is no separate form for RAS revisions and cancellations. You will need to submit a new RAS form and attach to it a copy of the previously submitted RAS form. Clearly mark on the old form the information that is to be changed or cancelled, using the “Notes” section as needed to clarify. Enter the new information on the new form.

Avoid common problems:

- Attach **copies** of the Appointment & Position Data forms—**not** the originals. (Originals must be sent to the appropriate payroll office.)
- Attach a copy of the GDES screen (for accounts opened prior to 8/15/08) or the GM045 Sponsored Project Budget Statement.
- Make sure the math is correct.
- Chart strings & position numbers must match on all forms.
- Payroll period on the RAS must fall within the start & stop dates shown on the Position Data Form
- The Expense Account for tuition should be 78020.
- Compensation Rate on the Appointment Form needs to match the Monthly Salary entry on the RAS form.
- Make certain the chart string is RAS eligible. (See eligibility requirements on the previous page).
- When drawing on multiple chart strings, make certain that the amounts to be paid are proportionate to the percentages on the Position Data Form.
- Send forms *directly* to Tina Mete ASRSP.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE RAS FORM

ACTION

Check the appropriate box in **Category A** *OR* the appropriate box(es) in **Category B**.

Category A—New appointment

- Initial Appointment—if this is the first request for an RAS for this student for this academic year
- Add quarters only—to request an RAS for additional quarters

Category B—Revise previously requested RAS (*check all that apply*)

- Change/cancel quarters—if an RAS needs to be cancelled or applied to a different quarter
- Change in registration—if the student's registration in a given quarter differs from that previously indicated
- Change in source—if there is a change in the funding chart string number

If any boxes in Category B are checked, you must attach a copy of the previously submitted RAS form. Clearly mark on the old form the information that is to be changed or cancelled, using the "Notes" section as needed to clarify. Enter the new information on the new form.

STUDENT INFORMATION

- STUDENT ID# is the number assigned through SES; HRIS ID# is assigned in HRIS. (Numbers may differ.)
- Provide student's **home** academic department; if you are not certain what the home department is, leave blank. Do not use the HRIS Department ID or the funding department name.
- Check NEW if the student entered The Graduate School during 2008/2009; otherwise check CONTINUING.

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Enter all requested information.
- If the student is being paid from more than one RAS-eligible sponsored chart string, the information for each chart string must be reported on a separate RAS form. (Submit all forms at the same time, and number the forms appropriately—e.g., 1 of 2, 2 of 2, etc. at the upper right hand corner of the form.)

FUNDING FROM SPONSORED PROJECT INFORMATION

Payroll period

- Enter the beginning and ending dates of the payroll period.
- The payroll period on the RAS form must fall within the start and stop dates shown on the Position Data Form.

Monthly salary

- Enter the monthly salary, the number of months of payment, and the total salary to be paid from the chart string.
- If the student is being paid from two or more RAS-eligible sponsored chart strings, make certain that the amount corresponds with the percentage indicated on the Position Data Form.
- The Monthly Salary on the RAS form must match (or be proportional to) the Compensation Rate on the Appointment Form.
- The total monthly salary being paid from one or more RAS-eligible chart strings must be at least \$1728/month.

Quarterly Tuition to be paid from project

- Write in the dollar amounts for each quarter and the total that are to be paid from the chart string.
- Use the tuition rates provided on the form to determine the rate that corresponds to the student's registration.
- If the student is being paid from two or more RAS-eligible sponsored chart strings, make certain that the amount provided corresponds with the percentage indicated on the Position Data Form. Tuition payment must be divided in the same proportion as stipend payment.

RAS AWARD INFORMATION

Check off the appropriate quarters/registrations for which an RAS is requested.

KEEP COPIES OF ALL RAS FORMS. If an RAS request needs to be changed or cancelled at a later date, you will need to attach a copy of the original request, on which you will mark all changes or cancellations.

SEND FORMS *DIRECTLY* to Tina Mete ASRSP along with copies of the Appointment Form, Position Data Form and the GDES screen (for accounts established prior to 8/15/08) or the GM405 Sponsored Project Budget Statement.

Further Information for Sponsored chart strings:

Please keep in mind the following:

- If a student has already been paid out of one sponsored chart string, and effort has already been certified, it is **not** possible to retroactively revise the RAS in order to switch the student to another chart string.
- "Parking" of a student on one project until another project becomes funded is strictly prohibited, regardless of circumstances.
- *Please be advised that revising payroll on sponsored chart strings is an audit flag.*
- Revisions that are over 90 days old require a **90-day exception letter** addressed to ASRSP.