
Overview

All tuition charges on sponsored awards must be consistent with the funding agency's written policies, applicable laws and regulations, and Northeastern's [Policy on Tuition on Sponsored Awards](#). If PhD students are included in a proposal and/or award budget, include tuition costs in the budgets when allowable.

Application of Policy

Policy Applies To:

New and renewal proposals submitted to Federal and non-Federal funding agencies with due dates on or after January 1, 2026, where:

- Tuition is allowable per the funding agency's guidelines, AND
- PhD students enrolled at Northeastern are budgeted.

Policy Does NOT Apply To:

- Existing awards
- Proposals submitted with due dates prior to January 1, 2026
- Startup funds
- Internal grants
- Individual Fellowship/Institutional Training Programs
- Awards where tuition is not an allowable cost per agency guidelines
- Gifts
- Master's students

Allowability

If tuition is not an allowable cost per the funding agency's guidelines, it should not be included in the proposal budget. The sponsor's guidelines take precedence over university policy.

Exceptions to This Policy

To request a waiver of the policy:

1. Contact the Senior Vice Provost for Research
2. Provide a justification for why tuition should not be charged
3. Include your Dean or designee's approval of the waiver request
4. Allow 2 weeks for review
5. Upload approval to the ePAWs proposal record

If tuition is allowable per sponsor guidelines but is waived through the exception process, the waived tuition will be treated as institutional cost share and tracked accordingly for internal reporting purposes.

QuickCard: Tuition on Sponsored Awards



Standard Tuition Rate for PhD Students

The maximum tuition for PhD students that will be budgeted and charged to sponsored awards is 50% of the academic year (AY) tuition.

Understanding the Tuition Calculation for PhD Students:

The rates shown below are for the 2026-2027 academic year. Tuition rates go up annually in the spring, around April, and are posted [here](#) under Graduate Programs > PhD Programs. Use current rates at time of proposal submission.

Component	Amount (2026-2027)
Full Year tuition (Fall + Spring + Summer)	\$49,257
Academic Year (AY) tuition (Fall + Spring only)	\$32,838
50% of AY tuition	\$16,419
Monthly AY Rate (\$16,419.33 ÷ 12 months)	\$1,368.25 per month

Formula: Tuition = \$1,368.25 × (Hours per week ÷ 20) × Calendar months

Note: The 50% of AY tuition model reflects that PhD students typically work 20 hours per week (6 full-time calendar months over 12-month period). Tuition charges must be pro-rated based on how much effort the student provides to the individual project.

Escalation: Include an **inflation escalation factor of 5%** for future years in the proposal budget.

Federal Funding Agency Guidance

Federal Cost Principles:

- Uniform Guidance [§ 200.466](#) (Scholarships, student aid costs, and tuition) governs the allowability of tuition costs.
- Tuition costs are excluded from **Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC)** when calculating indirect costs

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Applicable Notices:

- [NOT-OD-02-017: Graduate Student Compensation](#)
- [NOT-OD-26-044: NRSA Stipends, Tuition/Fees and Other Budgetary Levels Effective for Fiscal Year 2026](#)

NIH Research Grants (R, P, U series): Budget the same as for all other sponsors. Do not reduce any component of graduate student compensation to fit within the NIH graduate student compensation limit; NIH applies its limit at award. See the [Tuition FAQs](#) for details.

QuickCard: Tuition on Sponsored Awards



NIH Training Grants (T-series) and Fellowships (F-series): Budget according to NIH instructions, not this guidance.

Other Federal Agencies

For other federal agencies such as NSF, DOD, DOE, DHS, tuition costs are generally allowable and should be budgeted according to this guidance unless the funding announcement indicates otherwise.

Note: For all funding agencies, always refer to the funding announcement/instructions for specific guidance as it will take precedence.

Understanding PhD Student Effort

For PhD students:

- Full-time effort (100% of appointment) = 20 hours per week = 6 person months over 12 calendar months
- **This is DIFFERENT from postdocs/staff** where 100% effort = 40 hours per week = 12 person months

⚠ Important: When budgeting for "12 months," specify "20 hours per week" in your budget justification to clarify part-time status.

Proposal Preparation Example

Standard PhD Student on a Research Grant (All Sponsors, Including NIH)

Note: This example uses PhD student tuition rates for the 2026-2027 academic year for illustrative purposes. Amounts are rounded to the nearest cent. Always use the current tuition rates at the time of proposal submission.

Scenario	Hours/ Week	Monthly Rate	Effort	Duration (Months)	Tuition Requested
1	20	\$1,368.25	1.0 (100%)	12	$\$1,368.25 \times 1.0 \times 12 = \$16,419$
2	10	\$1,368.25	0.5 (50%)	12	$\$1,368.25 \times 0.5 \times 12 = \$8,209.50$
3	4	\$1,368.25	0.2 (20%)	12	$\$1,368.25 \times 0.2 \times 12 = \$3,283.80$
4	20	\$1,368.25	1.0 (100%)	6	$\$1,368.25 \times 1.0 \times 6 = \$8,209.50$

Principal Investigator's Responsibilities

By budgeting PhD students with tuition on sponsored awards, the Principal Investigator confirms that consistent with Uniform Guidance § 200.466:

- The student is conducting activities necessary to the award
- Compensation, inclusive of tuition remission, is reasonable for activities performed
- The student is enrolled in a PhD program at Northeastern University

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Salary Certification: Graduate students paid on awards must also have their pay certified by the PI pursuant to Uniform Guidance [§ 200.430](#).¹

Additional Resources

FAQs: [FAQs | Research Enterprise Services \(NU-RES\)](#)

Appendix: Sample Budget Justification

Budget Justification Statement (all sponsors, including NIH):

"\$XX,XXX is requested for PhD student tuition support. PhD students work a maximum of 20 hours per week on sponsored projects (full-time PhD student effort = 6 person months over 12 calendar months). Tuition is budgeted per Northeastern University policy at 50% of academic year tuition, prorated for effort on the project. Tuition is escalated by 5% annually for future budget periods."

¹ Tuition that is reimbursed as part of a NRSA individual fellowship or institutional training award is considered part of their overall stipend and allowance and, therefore, trainees do not certify T&E.