

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Implementation of ASE and GSR Collective Bargaining Agreements**

Original issuance: March 2023

Amended issuance: [10/14/2024](#) – all revisions are noted below

This document highlights and summarizes implementation of the ASE and GSR collective bargaining agreements. This document is not an exhaustive list of all updates or changes. There is no substitution for careful reading of the actual language in the Agreement, as the FAQs are intended to highlight and direct attention to the key areas which Deans, Chairs, and Administrators need to know. The FAQs should be read in conjunction with the Agreement.

### **I. What is a “top-up”? [Updated 10/14/2024](#)**

The concept of a “top-up” is as follows:

1. A “top-up” (also called “top-off”) is defined as the amount of money that an ASE or GSR received above their ASE or GSR employment wages to reach their department’s previously offered funding package commitment and receipt of the remaining funding package amount is dependent on whether the individual accepts the ASE or GSR appointment. [Updated 10/14/2024](#)
2. “Micro-GSR” appointments, which are very small GSR appointments coinciding with existing ASE appointments and serving only as a technical vehicle for pay to help reach the exact funding package amount, meet the definition of a “top-up” in I.1 above. [Added 10/14/2024](#)
3. For funding package commitments issued, where only a total annual funding package amount is listed, where summer student financial support is offered, and such funding package commitment expressly provides that the funding will be through a combination of ASE or GSR employment and non-employment student financial support: if such summer student financial support is reduced and substantially offsets the wage increases for an ASE or GSR’s appointment during the prior academic year, solely to maintain the annual funding package amount, it would be considered a “top-up”. [Added 10/14/2024](#)

An example of a top-up was when a department’s student funding package states the student will receive \$34,000 each year, to be provided in a combination of employment and non-employment student funding. For a Teaching Assistant at 50% FTE (utilizing 50% FTE for ease of calculations) earning \$23,247, the department provided the student a top-up of \$10,753 (\$34,000-\$23,247 = \$10,753) in the form of student support, contingent on acceptance of the Teaching Assistant appointment. If the student rejected the Teaching Assistant appointment, they did not receive the \$10,753 either. [Updated 10/14/2024](#)

### **II. How will top-ups be subsumed into the ASE/GSR salary scales?**

#### **1. What happened in Spring 2023? [Updated 10/14/2024](#)**

In order to implement the parties’ agreement to subsume top-ups into the new higher salary scales,

there was a “bridge” from where we were in Winter of 2023 to where we ended up that provides for continued top- up support to existing ASEs and GSRs as we migrated toward the new salary scales.

Departments paid the top-up amounts that they would have paid in Spring 2023 absent any wage increases. These were paid through the usual channels. For example, if the top-up amount that the department would have paid through the student financial systems to a GSR was \$1,850 if there were no wage increase on April 1, then that is the amount issued through the student financial systems in Spring 2023.

## **2. What happened to top-ups in Fall 2023 and beyond? *Updated 10/14/2024***

Top-ups were converted into wages and subsumed into the new salary scales for current employees. After this one-time conversion, the agreed upon salary scales for each unit was applied going forward and top-ups no longer existed. Maintaining the integrity of the salary scales negotiated into the collective bargaining agreement is essential to the University’s role as a steward of public funds, to maintaining the strength of graduate education at UC, and to give meaning to the salary scales and the newly created experience-based movement through the salary scales that were negotiated by both parties.

The top-ups were included in the salary scales and applied consistently across student employees after October 1, 2023 (some of the top-up amounts were so large that they were not fully subsumed into the salary scales until October 1, 2024).

Effective October 1, 2023, no further top-ups were to be issued through the student financial systems and instead the top-up amount were to be incorporated into wages as described in FAQ II.3 below. The University should not be issuing any top-ups after this date and top-ups should no longer exist.

## **3. What happened specifically on October 1, 2023? *Updated 10/14/2024***

On October 1, 2023, all ASEs and GSRs received a general range adjustment to their salary scales, including the implementation of experience-based minimums. In determining placement on the salary scale, an ASE or GSR’s top-up amount was added into their total wage rate. If the resulting dollar amount did not match a salary point, then the ASE/GSR was moved to the next highest point. Please see the following implementation examples that were provided to campuses below:

**Example 1: GSR Top-Up Transition to On-Scale Rate on October 1, 2023** *Updated 10/14/2024*

**Disclaimer:** For ease of calculation interpretation, the University will be using examples of a 50% appointment throughout this document.

Assumptions	October 1, 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Semester campus</li><li>- Funding package was \$34,000/year (\$17,000/semester)</li><li>- Admissions letter was explicit that the student must have employment to receive the full funding package, but the department will supplement the wages up to \$17,000/semester</li><li>- Student accepted GSR position at Level 5 at 50% for Spring 2023; current wage was \$30,300, or \$15,150 for the semester</li><li>- The top-up received for Spring 2023 was \$1,850</li><li>- Received 7.5% general range adjustment to base wage on April 1, 2023, increased it to \$32,907 (50% FTE) or \$16,454 for Spring 2023</li><li>- Spring 2023 rate was \$16,454 + \$1,850 top-up = \$18,303 or \$36,607 (50% FTE)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Must be paid at minimum of GSR Level 2 due to experience -- GSR Level 2 rate increased to \$35,014 (50%) or \$17,507 for the semester</li><li>- However, because the Spring 2023 rate of \$36,607 was both greater than current GSR Level 2 and fell in between Level 2 and Level 3, the GSR was placed at Level 3</li><li>- GSR was placed at Level 3; new rate was \$37,727/year (50%) or \$18,864/semester</li><li>- The GSR is was on-scale and the funding commitment was fully met by the GSR salary, so the top-up was fully subsumed into the salary scale.</li></ul>

**Example 2: ASE (Teaching Assistant) Transition to On-Scale Rate – Through October 1, 2024**  
*Updated 10/14/2024*

Assumptions	Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group 2 campus; semesters</li> <li>- In first year of TA experience</li> <li>- Funding package is \$34,000/year (\$17,000/semester)</li> <li>- Admissions letter was explicit that the student must have employment to receive the full funding package, but the department will supplement the wages up to \$17,000/semester</li> <li>- Student accepted TA position at 50% for Spring 2023; current wage was \$23,246, or \$11,623 for the semester</li> <li>- The top-up for Spring 2023 was \$5,377</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens on 4/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TA rate increased to \$25,000 (50%) or \$12,500 for semester</li> <li>- Applied the current top-up amount of \$5,377</li> <li>- New total wage rate starting 4/1/23 was \$17,877</li> <li>- Equivalent to \$35,754/year</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TA was eligible to move to Group 2, Level 2 (\$32,204) but the Spring 2023 wage, including the top-up, was already higher than Level 3 (\$33,170)</li> <li>- Per the agreement, the TA received a 2% increase because they were above the salary scale</li> <li>- TA salary for AY 23-24: \$36,469</li> <li>- The funding commitment was fully met by the TA salary</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/24?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TA is eligible to move to Group 2, Level 3 (\$38,723)</li> <li>- This is 6.2% higher than the AY 23-24 rate</li> <li>- The TA is now <u>on-scale</u> at Group 2, Level 3</li> </ul>

**Example 3: GSR Transition to On-Scale Rate** *Updated 10/14/2024*

Assumptions	Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarter campus</li> <li>- Funding package was \$35,000/12 months (\$8,750/quarter)</li> <li>- Department supplements the salary each quarter, contingent on employment</li> <li>- Student accepted GSR position at Level 7 at 50% for Spring 2023; current wage was \$34,246, or \$8,562 for the quarter</li> <li>- The top-up for Spring 2023 was \$188</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens on 4/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GSR Level 7 becomes the new Level 4; no experience movement required</li> <li>- Salary was \$38,205 (50%) or \$9,551/quarter</li> <li>- Applied current top-up amount of \$188</li> <li>- New total wage for Spring 2023 was \$9,739</li> <li>- Equivalent to \$38,956/year</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GSR was above experience minimum, can remain at Level 4</li> <li>- Salary was \$40,651 (50%) or \$10,163/quarter</li> <li>- GSR was on-scale at Level 4 and the funding commitment was fully met by the GSR salary</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/24?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GSR is above experience minimum, can remain at Level 4</li> <li>- Salary is \$43,241 (50%) or \$10,810/quarter</li> </ul>

**Example 4: GSR Trainee Transition – Top-Up** *Updated 10/14/2024*

Assumptions	Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food &amp; Ag Science National Needs Fellowship (training grant)</li> <li>- Quarter campus</li> <li>- Funding Package was \$35,000 per year</li> <li>- Institutional award provides a \$24,500 stipend per year, 3 year award</li> <li>- Department supplements the salary each quarter and received the supplement is contingent on employment</li> <li>- Student's first year on the award was 2022/2023</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens on 4/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nothing happened, because GSR trainees and fellows do not move onto the salary scale until 10/1/23</li> <li>- Trainee continued to receive the award stipend and the supplement payment from the department that continued through 9/30/2023</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Award stipend amount remained at \$24,500 per year</li> <li>- The contract required that the student transition to the GSR salary scale effective 10/1/23</li> <li>- Student was placed on salary point 2 on the GSR salary scale at \$35,014 (50%) due to prior experience</li> <li>- Department provided \$10,514 in supplemental wages on top of the \$24,500 to reach salary point 2</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/24?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Award stipend amount remains at \$24,500 per year</li> <li>- Student is placed on salary point 3 on the GSR scale at \$40,130 (50%) due to prior experience</li> <li>- Department will provide \$15,630 in supplemental wages on top of the \$24,500 to reach salary point 3</li> </ul>

**Example 5: GSR Fellow Transition – NSF GRFP** *Updated 10/14/2024*

Assumptions	Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarter campus</li> <li>- Fellowship provided a \$37,000 stipend per year; 3 years of support that may not be consecutive.</li> <li>- Student's first year on the fellowship was 2022/2023</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens on 4/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nothing happened, because GSR trainees and fellows do not move onto the salary scale until 10/1/23</li> <li>- Fellow continued to receive the award stipend through 9/30/2023</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GSR was not on the NSF GRFP Fellowship and was appointed in a "regular" GSR title</li> <li>- Fellow was placed on salary point 2 on the GSR scale at \$35,014 (50%) due to prior experience</li> </ul> <p><b>What happens on 10/1/24?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GSR moves back onto the GRFP fellowship</li> <li>- Fellowship provides a \$37,000 stipend per year</li> <li>- Fellow is placed on salary point 3 on the GSR scale at \$40,130 (50%) due to prior experience</li> <li>- Department will provide \$3,130 in supplemental wages on top of the \$37,000 to reach salary point 3</li> </ul>

#### 4. Micro-GSR Appointments *Added 10/14/2024*

At some campuses or programs, top-up amounts may have been in the form of very small GSR appointments (without associated duties and responsibilities) coinciding with existing ASE appointments, instead of being paid through student financial systems. When these GSR appointments were made as a technical vehicle for a student to reach the exact funding package amount, they met the definition of a “Micro-GSR” as defined in Section I.2 above and were to be treated as a “top-up”.

#### 5. Summer Funding *Updated 10/14/2024*

- a. **For Summer 2023, what if the funding package clearly delineates summer support as separate and apart from funding during the academic year and makes acceptance of the summer funding contingent on accepting employment?**

If the summer support met the definition of “top-up” as defined in FAQ Section I above, the department was to continue to provide that summer top-up support in Summer 2023. Effective October 1, 2023 and onwards, any summer top-up support was to be subsumed into the salary scales.

If the summer support did not meet that definition of “top-up” because, for example, it is not tied to a GSR or ASE appointment, then it was not to be subsumed into wages and should continue as a separate form of student financial support.

- b. **However, in accordance with FAQ Section I.3, summer funding may still be considered a top-up if the following conditions are met: *Added 10/14/2024***

- 1) for funding package commitments issued where only a total annual funding package amount is listed; AND
- 2) where summer student financial support is offered; AND
- 3) such funding package commitment expressly provides that the funding will be through a combination of ASE or GSR employment and non-employment student financial support:
  - I. if such summer student financial support is reduced; AND
  - II. that reduction substantially offsets the wage increases for an ASE or GSR’s appointment during the prior academic year, solely to maintain the annual funding package amount

✓ THEN it would be considered a “top-up.”

### III. **How was a top-up to be incorporated into wages when a graduate student transitioned between ASE and GSR titles from Spring 2023 to Fall 2023? *Updated 10/14/2024***

In accordance with the definition of a Top-Up (Section I above) and the reason for different and distinct

salary scales (Section IV.2 below), departments were to treat the total financial package number as the incoming wage rate ahead of the 10/1/23 scale adjustment and experience-based placement on the respective ASE or GSR scale. See the following implementation examples:

**Example 1: Spring 2023 GSR to Fall 2023 ASE *Updated 10/14/2024***

Assumptions / GSR Spring 2023	October 1, 2023 – Moves to ASE Fall 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semester campus</li> <li>- Funding package was \$34,000/year (\$17,000/term)</li> <li>- Admissions letter was explicit that the student must have employment, but the department will supplement the wages up to \$17,000/term</li> </ul> <p><b>GSR Appointment – Spring 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student accepted GSR position at Level 5 at 50% for Spring 2023; current wage was \$30,300, or \$15,150 for the semester</li> <li>- The top-up for Spring 2023 was \$1,850</li> <li>- Received 7.5% general range adjustment to base wage on April 1, 2023, increased to \$32,907 (50% FTE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graduate student accepted a TA appointment in Fall 2023 (with only one semester of prior teaching experience)</li> <li>- TA was only eligible for Group 1, Level 1 (\$29,125 – 50%) but \$34,000 financial package number was already higher than Level 3 (\$30,899) and considered “above-scale.”</li> <li>- Per the agreement, the TA received a 2% increase instead on \$34,000</li> <li>- TA salary for AY 23-24: \$34,680</li> </ul> <p><i>For future appointments as a GSR after Fall 2023, departments should follow the procedures outlined above to incorporate the Spring 2023 GSR top-up into wages (which is an increase from Spring 2023), irrespective of the ASE appointment.</i></p>

## Example 2: Spring 2023 ASE to Fall 2023 GSR *Updated 10/14/2024*

Assumptions / ASE Spring 2023	October 1, 2023 – Moves to GSR Fall 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group 2 campus; semesters</li> <li>- Funding package is \$34,000/year (\$17,000/term)</li> <li>- Admissions letter was explicit that the student must have employment to receive the full funding package, but the department will supplement the wages up to \$17,000/term</li> </ul> <p><b>ASE Appointment – Spring 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student accepted TA position at 50% for Spring 2023; current wage was \$23,246, or \$11,623 for the semester</li> <li>- The top-up for Spring 2023 was \$5,377</li> <li>- Received 7.54% rate increased to \$25,000 (50% FTE) or \$12,500 for semester</li> <li>- Applied the current top-up amount of \$5,377</li> <li>- New total base wage rate starting 4/1/23 was \$35,754/year</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens on 10/1/23?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graduate student accepted a GSR appointment in Fall 2023 (no prior GSR experience)</li> <li>- GSR was only eligible for Salary Point 1 but \$34,000 financial package number was already higher than salary point 1 (\$32,495 – 50%) and fell in between points 1 and 2. The GSR was placed at Salary Point 2 (\$35,014)</li> <li>- <i>For future appointments as an ASE after Fall 2023, departments should follow the procedures outlined above to incorporate the Spring 2023 ASE top-up into wages (which is an increase from Spring 2023), irrespective of the GSR appointment.</i></li> </ul>

## IV. ASEs and GSRs Salary Scales

### 1. May the ASE and GSR salary scales be treated the same?

No, the University and the Union negotiated distinct and different salary scales with different wage rates for ASEs and GSRs. ASEs are on Tables [18](#), [19](#), and [20](#) (this includes higher salary scales for ASEs at UCB, UCLA, and UCSF beginning October 1, 2023). GSRs are on Table [22](#). Placement on the ASE and GSR salary scales, including experience-based advancement, has been newly established in the collective bargaining agreement between the University and the Union and should be adhered to.

The ASE and GSR salary scales that went into effect on October 1, 2023, represent significant wage increases (general range adjustments ranging from 6.4% to 25.1%), in addition to contractually-mandated minimum salaries based on experience.

### 2. What is the reason for different salary scales between ASEs and GSRs?

ASEs and GSRs are in different bargaining units, performing distinct work; ASEs engage in instruction and GSRs engage in research. This is reinforced by the parties' agreement to different, experience-based salary scales within each bargaining unit. Providing the exact same pay for ASE and GSR employment creates the assumption of equivalent work, does not recognize the achievements in advancement based on experience that the parties negotiated, and renders meaningless the different and distinct salary scales the parties agreed to.



In order for a department to provide a GSR appointment and place them on the appropriate point on the GSR salary scale, they must meet the definition of GSR as defined in the collective bargaining agreement. Specifically, departments may only appoint graduate students in GSR titles if they meet the following definitions:

- Graduate Student Researcher: Graduate student who performs research as a condition of receiving financial remuneration from funding generated by the University in an academic department or research unit, provided that the graduate student is performing this funded research under the control of the University and under the specific direction of a faculty member or authorized Principal Investigator.
- “Trainee” Category of Employees: Where the graduate student meets the terms identified above and the funding source from which they receive remuneration deems that the money provided cannot be characterized as wages, the graduate student is an employee and the University will place the graduate student employee in a new “Trainee” title code that reflects that the money provided is not subject to a W-2.
- “Fellow” Category of Employees: Graduate student who (i) obtains individual fellowship(s) where receipt of the fellowship funding requires the performance of a service for the University; and (ii) performs research in an academic department or research unit, provided that the graduate student is performing this fellowship research under the control of the University and under the specific direction of a faculty member or authorized Principal Investigator.

### **3. Should GSRs and ASEs be paid their salary scale rate? *Updated 10/14/2024***

Yes, GSRs and ASEs should be paid on-scale. “Off-Scale” pay is governed by the APM and not permitted.

While the collective bargaining agreement allows the University to pay above the salary scale at its discretion, outside of the process of converting top-ups into wages and thereby necessitating pay above the salary scale, departments must seek prior approval from the central office designated by the campus before moving forward with wages above the salary scale. Each campus will distribute guidance as to the appropriate office to provide the pre-approval and the process for seeking prior approval, if they have not done so already.

Those paid above the salary scale will receive a smaller increase (2%) than those who are on-scale (who will receive the general range adjustment, which is larger than 2%).

## **V. How should campuses handle prospective student financial support letters?**

### **1. How should campuses prepare admissions/student funding letters in the future?**

Student financial support letters should be separate from any employment offer letters. Corresponding templates for each type of letter (student financial support and employment offer letters) were provided for prospective use.

## **2. What is the difference between employment and other student financial support?**

Non-employment student financial support (including overall dollars in an offer package) are not “compensation, “wages”, or “salary.” Under the Recognition article in the GSR collective bargaining agreement, “non-employment student financial support” is funding, including financial aid awards, to pursue a course of study, with no or de minimis service expectation imposed by the University, and whose receipt of these funds does not require the performance of service at the direction and control of the University.

## **VI. Can departments continue to provide students student financial support, including one-time funding awards?**

Yes, there is a clear distinction between financial aid support for students versus wages for employment in the collective bargaining agreement:

- In the GSR Recognition article, it states that “Students who receive funding, including financial aid awards, to pursue a course of study with no or de minimis service expectation imposed by the University, and whose receipt of these funds does not require the performance of service at the direction and control of the University...” are excluded from the bargaining unit.
- In the Management and Academic Rights article for both the [ASE](#) and [GSR](#) collective bargaining agreements, it states, “The Agreement is limited to all matters within the ‘scope of representation.’ The collective bargaining agreement solely regulates the wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment for GSRs, pursuant to HEERA. With this understanding, the University retains sole discretion and authority over issues related to academic judgment and student matters, including but not limited to: . . . financial aid, tuition and fees; financial support to students, including, but not limited to application, selection, funding, administration, usage, accountability and termination and all matters related thereto.”

It is within the University’s management and academic rights to provide graduate students with funding awards, including one-time funding, if the award is not contingent on employment with the University. Departments may, and should, continue to provide student financial support that is completely disconnected from work obligations.

## **VII. How are staff expected to manage already demanding workloads while addressing these important and required processing changes and undertaking necessary training and learning opportunities to do so?**

Appropriate processing of the new agreements and transitioning to these changes represent new and significant workload issues. UCOP and campus leadership recognize the significant administrative challenges surrounding the changes and transition to the new contract agreements. There are increased workload and complexities for faculty and staff. Campus and department leadership are encouraged to acknowledge difficulties and provide for flexibility, creative support mechanisms and/or additional resources to assist as possible.