UAB The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Graduate School

Blazer Graduate Research Fellowship Guidelines for AY 2026-2027

Fellowship Details

Blazer Graduate Research Fellows: The UAB Graduate School will award Blazer Graduate Research Fellowships (Blazer Fellows) to support faculty research programs by recruiting and supporting outstanding, highly qualified doctoral trainees who will engage in full-time research. Blazer Graduate Research Fellowships will provide financial support to include stipend, tuition, and health insurance to select first-year doctoral students training across our campus.

Period of Support: The term of the fellowship is four consecutive academic terms, beginning with the fall semester. Only under special circumstances and with permission from the Graduate School can the support be delayed to later terms. ***All support is contingent on satisfactory performance per Program and Graduate School policies.*** It is required that fellows be supported after completion of the Blazer Graduate Research Fellowship by the faculty mentor's intra- or extramural grant awards, contracts, institutional training grants, individual fellowship awards, or start-up/retention packages.

Stipend Amount for Blazer Fellows: The funded stipend amount for Blazer Fellows is $32,000 for STEM programs and $30,000 for non-STEM programs. These values are the baseline level of support for the fellows throughout their training, provided satisfactory progress is being made per Program and Graduate School policies. Program Directors can petition the Graduate School for a different stipend level if the recommended amount is significantly above or below the average for similar competing programs at other universities.

Number of Blazer Graduate Research Fellows Supported for Individual Programs: The total number of Fellows allocated to each program is based upon historical and current training capacity of program faculty. Training capacity is evaluated annually. Blazer Graduate Research Fellows are expected to be engaged in full-time research. These fellows can spend up to a maximum of **two** academic terms as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). When the fellow is serving as a GTA, stipend support should be provided from departmental resources (e.g., tuition revenue and/or laboratory fees) to relieve the burden on the mentor's funding while the student is not fully committed to research.

Process & Timeline

Program Support: Prior to the start of recruitment season, typically beginning in October, each Program Director will poll Program training faculty to assess both their willingness to mentor a new Blazer Graduate Research Fellow and their capacity to financially support them in their research program using grant/contract funding or university startup funds for new faculty. This assessment will serve only as a guide for recruitment of an appropriate number of Blazer Graduate Research Fellows each year for that Program. Please note these fellowships are not awarded directly to faculty.

Submission of Assessment Form: Program directors will submit the Recruitment Assessment Form to the Graduate School documenting the program's capacity and provide evidence of financial support for the requested number of new Blazer Fellows by **12/01/2025**.

These forms must be signed by the **Program Director, Department Chair (unless interdisciplinary), and by School/College Dean or designated Associate Dean**.

Review of Applicants: Blazer Fellows will be selected by each Graduate Program admissions committee. Programs should select their most outstanding applicants for the Blazer Graduate Research Fellowships, which can include international students.

Admissions Offer Deadline: All Programs must adhere to the **April 15** deadline for honoring offers of admission to Blazer Fellows as specified by the Council of Graduate Schools Resolution. All students must receive and sign the Graduate School Blazer Fellowship Appointment Letter (provided at time of approval of Fellowships). The appointment letter can be in addition to a program-specific letter, but a program letter is not in lieu of the Blazer Fellowship offer.

Signed Appointment Letters: Copies of all signed Blazer Fellow appointment letters must be submitted to the Graduate School at GradSchlFinance@uab.edu by **5/15/2026**.

Mentor Selection Form: At the time of selection of the research mentor, the Mentor Selection Form must be signed by the fellow, graduate Program Director, the mentor, and the chair of the department (where mentors hold their primary appointment) and submitted to the Graduate School. Signing the Mentor Selection Form confirms commitment of the mentor and/or department to provide full funding of stipend, tuition, and health insurance for the Fellow throughout the training period up to defense of the doctorate.

Expectations of Blazer Fellows: In addition to departmental requirements, students must register for, and satisfactorily complete, at least 27 semester hours of approved graduate course work each year. This coursework is generally in the form of 9 hours each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer) but can be arranged differently as needed and approved by the program.

In addition to being committed to successful progression in meeting Program requirements, all Blazer Graduate Fellows **are highly encouraged** to apply for individual fellowships from federal sources (e.g. NIH, NSF, NASA, etc.) or private foundations if eligible.

Important Deadlines

December 1: Graduate Program Recruitment Assessment Forms must be completed, signed, and turned into the Graduate School by **December 1, 2025.**

April 15: All programs must adhere to the Council of Graduate Schools **April 15, 2026** deadline for honoring offers for admission.

May 15: Copies of the signed Blazer Graduate Research Fellow offer letters must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than **May 15, 2026.**

August 1: A copy of the signed Mentor Selection Form for each Blazer Graduate Research Fellow that matriculated in 2025 must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than **August 1, 2026**