

**Stipend for Business Use of Wireless Communication Devices**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Update 8.1.2017**

**1. How does this Policy benefit Mason?**

The Board of Visitors has tasked Executive Management with seeking and reporting regularly on efficiencies and cost savings in light of tuition pressures and the debt burden on many students. This policy ensures compliance with Commonwealth and IRS requirements.

**2. How does the Policy benefit Mason employees?**

The policy empowers employees to make their own choices relative to their combined business, individual and family wireless communication needs. Employees do not need to carry two wireless communication devices, one for personal and one for business.

According to one employee who transitioned to the stipend program, *“Many in our department view the stipend policy as a win-win. I was able to eliminate the need to carry a second device and reduced my out-of-pocket expense on my personal phone.”*

**3. Why is the stipend only \$45?**

Last year the IRS significantly reduced the administrative burden associated with stipends to both employees and employers. The State published a monthly stipend rate for smart phones of \$45 that is not subject to tax (no employer FICA cost and not a taxable benefit to the employee). The \$45 is intended to cover the business use of a personal cellular device.

**4. I do not want my personal cell number to be broadly available to my business contacts. How can I limit its dissemination?**

The university offers Enhanced Voicemail that is associated with a user’s office phone. This is designed for the user who is near the office phone most of the time, but wants to be reached on a mobile (or other) device when not in the office. When someone calls and reaches voicemail, a menu prompts the calling party to press a number to try to reach the called party at another extension. If that call fails, the menu repeats and the caller can select another option to leave a voicemail message. Enhanced voicemail is \$2.50 per line per month, chargeable to the user’s department. Enabling enhanced voicemail does not impact the \$45 stipend.

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Another option is to enter an id blocking pre-fix. Dial \*67 on your phone before dialing the phone number. Or adjust the settings on your phone.

**5. Since the device will be my personal device, is any information subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act?**

Email, text or voice messages or records related to university business are subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Under the statute, storage and retrieval of records is an individual responsibility. Use of Mason email for university business is strongly encouraged so that data storage and retrieval responsibility is facilitated by the university. The employee is responsible for retrieving from his/her wireless carrier any non-Mason email account records, text messages or telephone records related to a subpoena or FOIA request. Personal records are those entirely and totally unrelated to public business, and as such are not records of university business.

**6. Does Mason still issue university provided devices?**

When individuals need a new device, they will need to transition to the stipend policy, unless they fall in one of the exception categories outlined in the policy.

**7. When I transition to the stipend program, can I keep the phone number associated with my university owned phone?**

Telecom Admin will work with faculty and staff who transition from a university owned cell phone to a personally owned device. Departmental approval is required. Retaining the existing phone number is not assured but is possible, and there are more steps involved when changing carriers. All requests need to be directed to Kathy Bonafede, Cell Phone Administrator (kbonafed, 3-3542).

**8. Can grant funds be used to pay for the stipend?**

No. Charges associated with wireless communication devices are not allowed on federally sponsored funds unless an exception is authorized due to the unique nature of the project.

**9. Will ITS provide support for personal devices when they present problems doing university business?**

Yes. ITS will assist with password changes and other connectivity issues common with smart phone connections to email and calendar, regardless of device ownership.

**10. I telework one day a week and typically use my cell phone to call into meetings. How will I be compensated for this additional use?**

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The stipend is intended to cover this type of use. Employees should factor in their telework needs when determining the most appropriate plan. The flexibility provided by voluntary teleworking or remote working is viewed as having a personal work/life benefit to the employee.

**11. Has the university leveraged its buying power to gain any discounts for employees from commercial carriers?**

AT&T Mobility, Sprint and Verizon offer discounts to George Mason University employees for personal phones. For details, go to [http://telecomadmin.gmu.edu/facstaff/cellphones.cfm#CP\\_JUMP\\_1602](http://telecomadmin.gmu.edu/facstaff/cellphones.cfm#CP_JUMP_1602)

**12. My personal cell phone service does not include international calls. Are there any options for international call service in the event that I need to travel out of the country?**

Employees who have business needs to travel internationally should purchase an international plan for their phone for the period of the trip. This cost should be included on the Travel Reimbursement form.

**13. How will I receive the stipend?**

Supervisor and departmental approval is required; stipend availability is subject to departmental budget constraints. After completing the Wireless Communication Device Stipend Agreement, the stipend amount will be included in your paycheck as a benefit not subject to tax. Stipend agreements cannot be processed retroactively.

**14. If an employee should no longer receive the stipend, how can it be ended?**

Supervisors or HR Liaisons must notify Human Resources at [hrdm@gmu.edu](mailto:hrdm@gmu.edu), if the stipend should be discontinued. Provide the employee's name, G#, position and date service should be ended.

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**15. Who is responsible for termination fees associated with my university phone when I turn it in and transition to the stipend program?**

Termination fees are not assessed when cell phone service is terminated on university owned equipment.

**16. Does the policy cover iPads and other tablets?**

Not at this time. Faculty and staff should maximize their existing data plan where possible to cover additional device data needs (i.e., most phones can now act as a hotspot for no additional cost plan cost).

**17. What is the Supervisor's responsibility under the policy?**

The Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that a business need exists in all cases where a wireless communication device stipend is available to an employee. Supervisors must certify that he/she reviews the employee's monthly bill for the designated mobile telephone number at the time of the initial stipend. The Supervisor is also responsible for reviewing the continued business need of existing stipends for wireless communication devices annually and notifying Human Resources if the stipend should be discontinued. The stipend amount will be the amount of monthly charges for voice services, text and/or data if needed for business, taxes and may include equipment/access charges that are itemized on the bill, up to a maximum of \$45 per month.

Detailed review of business versus personal use is not necessary or appropriate. If line access charges are a single line-item for multiple lines; the amount that may be included in the stipend will be pro-rated by the number of lines. Supervisors are not required to keep employee phone records and may retain them only if all personal information except the last four digits of personal lines is redacted.

**18. What is the department head's responsibility under the policy?**

The Department Head is responsible for reviewing and approving initial requests for wireless communication device stipends, overseeing the use of wireless communication devices in his/her unit and for ensuring an annual renewal review of continued need is done by supervisors. The reconciler should ensure that the salary reconciliation completed for the month/period ending June 30 of each year includes the cell phone stipend listing signed and dated by the Supervisor.

**19. How can I review the stipends in my unit?**

The department reconciler will provide the Supervisor with a list of employee cell phone stipends on an annual basis. Instructions are available below and on the [Annual Wireless Stipend Review](#) guide. The reconciler should ensure that the salary reconciliation completed for the month/period ending June 30 or each year includes the cell phone

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stipend listing signed and dated by the Supervisor.

1. Login to [microstrategy.gmu.edu](http://microstrategy.gmu.edu).
2. Select the *Administrative* folder. Select *Shared Reports*. Select *Reconciliation*.
3. Select *Reconciliation Welcome Page* then *Reconciliation Expense* or *Reconciliation Revenue and Expense* (if the unit has revenue).
4. On the "Initial View" Dashboard click on the Organization number to open the "Labor and DE Drill Document"
5. Select the "Labor Detail" tab

Acct Groups L3	Acct Code	Orig Budget Expense Thru Apr	Rev Budget Expense Thru Apr	Actual Expenses Between Apr and Apr	YTD Actual Expenses Thru Apr	Available Bal Expense Thru Apr	Open Commitments Thru Apr	Projected Bal Expense Thru Apr
Labor	61220 Faculty Salary-Administrative	325,483.00	347,605.00	13,937.47	273,104.57	74,500.43	55,749.88	18,750.55
	61310 Classified Salaries	241,645.00	167,396.00	4,744.91	126,125.80	41,270.20	18,979.64	22,290.56
	61321 Admin Faculty Annual Leave Bal	0.00	0.00	0.00	12,059.64	(12,059.64)	0.00	(12,059.64)
	61370 Cell Phone Allowance	0.00	0.00	22.50	450.00	(450.00)	0.00	(450.00)
	61400 Budget Pool-Wages	34,272.00	34,272.00	0.00	0.00	34,272.00	0.00	34,272.00
	61410 Wages	0.00	0.00	6,277.74	84,859.85	(84,859.85)	0.00	(84,859.85)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>601,400.00</b>	<b>549,273.00</b>	<b>24,982.62</b>	<b>496,599.86</b>	<b>52,673.14</b>	<b>74,729.52</b>	<b>(22,056.38)</b>

6. Locate Account Code **61370, Cell Phone Allowance**. Leave the tab open and return to the "Initial View" Dashboard tab.
7. From the "Initial View" Dashboard select the white box "Reconciliation for Program Total in Excel"

8. Open the Excel Reconciliation, enable editing and create a new tab titled "Cell Phone Stipend Review." *Note: A formatted Excel spreadsheet is available here: <https://fiscal.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Cell-Phone-Stipend-Spreadsheet.xlsx>.*
9. Return to the "Labor Detail" tab to view and then record the individual names and stipend amounts on the spreadsheet. Provide the spreadsheet to the Supervisor to review and approve. Electronic approval is encouraged.

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The screenshot shows an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

Employee Name	Amount
Lisa Kemp	22.95
Jane Kirk	32.25
Annette Brown	23.25
May Willoughby	36.45

Below the table, there is a section for the supervisor's signature and date:

**Supervisor**  
I have reviewed the employee's monthly bill for the designated mobile telephone number and certify that a continued business need exists for the employees listed above.  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Save the signed and dated "Cell Phone Stipend Review" spreadsheet with the reconciliation for the month/period ending June 30 of each year.

\*A formatted Excel Spreadsheet is available for download here: <https://fiscal.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Cell-Phone-Stipend-Spreadsheet.xlsx>