



STUDENT EXTERNAL STIPEND SURVEY REPORT -2023

Prepared and submitted by- MUPA Executive Committee 2023

Presented by- MUPA President

Given the expensive rent and relatively high standard of living in this area, one really need to live frugally to survive on the RM2500 stipend. At times when there are extra expenses (for example traveling for conference), the amount will be insufficient to cover.

The living cost at Selangor is quite high if compared to other regions, especially the room rental. Even though the stipend is enough to cover monthly expenses, there is not enough money to cover any emergency expenses that may arise, like hospital fees and other misc stuff.

The amount I am getting is hard to survive. Being a international student need to spend on Visa renewal as well as air-fare.

Summary:

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of the stipend increase and the findings of a survey conducted among recipients. The primary objective was to evaluate the impact of the stipend on beneficiaries and gather feedback regarding its effectiveness and areas for improvement. It outlines the reasons behind the request, such as inflation rates, rising living costs, and the need for competitive compensation. The analysis demonstrates how the increase aligns with institutional standards and addresses concerns regarding financial stability for students.



CURRENT HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN MALAYSIA FOR A SINGLE PERSON TO SURVIVE

It is difficult for PhD students at Monash University Malaysia to make ends meet given the present family income situation in Malaysia. The COVID-19 pandemic's effects have had a substantial influence on income levels nationwide, with many people suffering from decreased incomes and job losses. The middle-class income criterion for the M40 category has been lowered to RM 4,850 per month, reflecting a drop in total income levels.

In this regard, the stipend given to PhD students at Monash University Malaysia is well below the amount of money needed to support a respectable level of life. The present allowance of RM 2,300–2,500 is insufficient to cover the growing cost of living, inflation, and required deductions like taxes, zakat (Islamic charitable donations), and payments to social security programmes. People in the M40 group, who struggle to pay their necessary bills and maintain a pleasant lifestyle, are severely impacted by this circumstance.

Furthermore, career options are frequently restricted for Monash University Malaysia's full-time PhD students. They are often not allowed to work normal jobs or to put in more than a particular amount of hours each week. They are now in a more difficult financial situation as a result of this limitation, which significantly restricts their capacity to create more revenue to pay for their education and maintain their standard of living.

The PhD students' financial difficulties are made even worse by the unfavourable currency exchange rates. The value of their stipend is diminished due to the depreciation of the Malaysian Ringgit in relation to other currencies, making it even more challenging for them to satisfy their financial obligations. International students are especially affected by this because their native currencies may be worth more, thereby depreciating their stipend's purchasing power.



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
CURRENT FINANCIAL CONDITION IN MALAYSIA.....	2
SURVEY RESULTS FOR INTERNAL STIPEND EXPENSE.....	4
CONCLUSION	7
REFERENCES.....	7

SURVEY RESULTS FOR EXTERNAL STIPEND EXPENSE

Introduction

The External Stipend Financial Survey conducted by the MUPA EXCO 2023 aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the financial circumstances and requirements of postgraduate (PG) students at the university. The survey specifically targeted two groups of students: HDR PhD students, comprising 89.5% of the respondents, and Masters students, who constituted 10.5% of the participants.

Course
19 responses

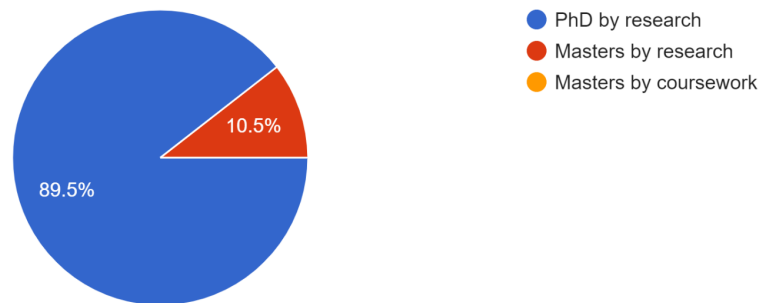


Figure 1. Percentage of PhD students and Masters students

By focusing on external stipend holders, the survey aimed to gather insights into the financial situation of students who rely on stipends provided by various grants. This subset of students was selected to understand the level of financial support they receive and assess its adequacy in meeting their needs.

The inclusion of both HDR PhD students and Masters students in the survey allowed for a broader representation of the PG student population as well as the various grants such as CREST, AMILI, JPA HLP, etc. HDR PhD students typically engage in extensive research and are often financially supported by stipends. On the other hand, Masters students may be pursuing their studies without a research focus, but they also receive internal stipends.

Profile of Respondents

Out of the respondents, 63.2% reported not receiving any additional financial support, indicating their reliance on the external stipend as their primary source of income. Furthermore, all the 63.2% of the participants reported being without dependents.

Are you receiving any additional financial support? (part-time jobs, home country support programs, parents/partner, etc)

19 responses

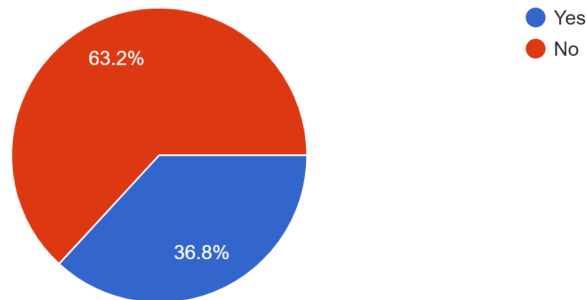


Figure 2. Percentage of students with and without additional financial support

Do you have dependents? If yes how many (numbers)

19 responses

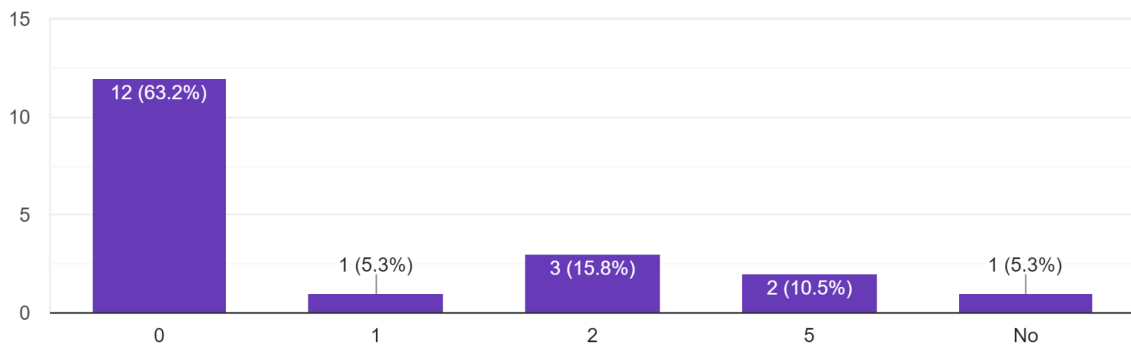


Figure 3. Percentage of students without dependents

Monthly Expenses

The survey analyzed the monthly expenses of the students and found that 88.5% of respondents had major monthly expenses exceeding RM 1000. The highest priority expense, as indicated by 57.9% of the respondents, was accommodation. This was followed by 10.5% for food and 15.8% for daily transportation.

How much is your major monthly expense? [For one person] (E.g., Renting, eating, commute, clothing, miscellaneous)

19 responses

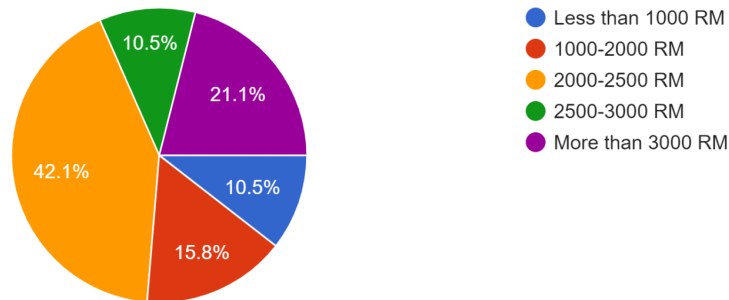


Figure 4. Students major monthly expenses

Please tick your highest priority from the list among your expenses

19 responses

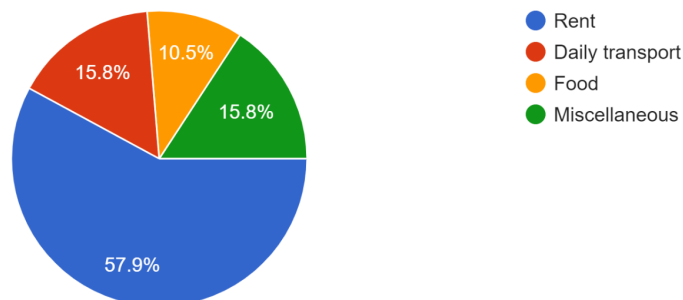


Figure 5.. Highest priority of expense.

Additional Expenses

In addition to the basic expenses such as rent, food, and transportation, it was discovered that 63.2% of the total respondents, who were students from outside klang valley, incurred additional expenses. The expenses included travel expenses, medical insurance, and for international students the additional expenses apart from the above mentioned are initial visa costs, and other related expenditures.

How much did it cost for your travel to Monash? (This includes the First Visa cost, medical expenses for the checkup, documentation vetting, travel ticket to Malaysia)

5 responses

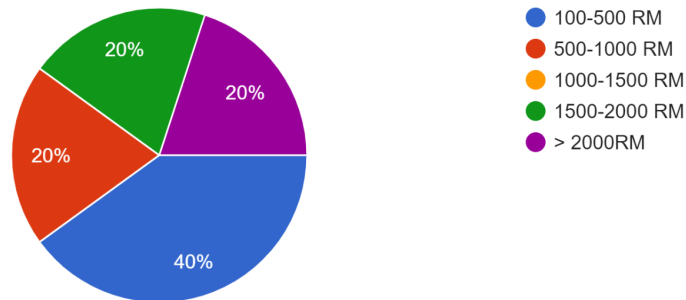


Figure 6. Percentage of international students with expenses apart from the genuine expenses

Increment of Stipend

A 94.7% of the respondents indicated that they believed an increment in the stipend was necessary. The reasons provided for this request were primarily related to the high cost of living and additional expenses beyond the basic necessities. The respondents emphasized the need for sufficient financial support to cover expenses such as rent, food, transportation, and the additional costs incurred by international students.

-
- *Please consider providing a support to the external grant who receives stipend less than 2.5k*
 - *It would be nice if there is a extra fund the GRSs could tap into to gain access to some equipment. For example, I am under FRGS, and there was no allocation for additional resources for non-stipend related stuff since they assumed that Monash will provide the necessary software/equipment needed for my project. However I found that I needed to get extra software or services online, and during that time, i have no monetary support, since FRGS does not cover extra costs. And as such, it would be nice to have a fund that GRS can tap into to request for extra stuff. (though if there is already one and i am not aware, please feel free to let me know)*
 - *additional financial support of a few hundred ringgit will greatly help ease the financial burden of living in an area with one of the highest cost of living in malaysia.*
 - *Although I have no personal problems with the current stipend I receive from JPA, I can not imagine how the international students or current internal students under scholarship get by when the cost of rent in Sunway is very high. I would like to suggest that a thorough review is done for scholars under the Monash stipend programme taking into account the cost of living expenses. Thanks.*
-

Conclusion

With Reference to the data explained in the Internal stipend Survey Report-2023 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EeJDRuntPgenqAtGa0t-aGAXNGgbdne6/view?usp=sharing>), we can very clearly understand that the Internal stipend which is of RM 2800 does not seem sufficient for the students currently enrolled in the Candidature. Therefore, it would be



great if the External Stipend students could receive some amount as an additional support in order to meet their expenses. The External Stipend Financial Survey conducted by the MUPA EXCO 2023 revealed that a significant number of PG students rely solely on the external stipend without any additional financial support. The survey highlighted the high monthly expenses faced by students, with accommodation being the most significant priority. International students, in particular, face additional financial burdens, including travel expenses, medical insurance, and visa costs. The demand for additional support with the stipend reflects the genuine need for better financial support to ensure the well-being and success of the students.

REFERENCES

- https://www.bnm.gov.my/documents/20124/6458991/ar2021_en_wb1.pdf.
- <https://www.comparehero.my/budgets-tax/articles/t20-m40-b40-malaysia>
- SUNWAY UNIVERSITY-POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTSHIP SCHEME AWARD-<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aBzv8-g8k0-JXy68q8lyXza2SPIF0tZ2/view?usp=sharing>
- UNIVERSITY MALAYA-THE UNIVERSITI MALAYA EXCELLENCE PhD SCHOLARSHIP-https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wHPwM9F9eLRfB0QO71r_MsGvFEkeXUz8/view?usp=sharing
- <https://educationmalaysia.gov.my/faq/#can-i-work-while-study>
- <https://www.nst.com.my/business/2023/05/914717/economists-ringgit-may-weaken-further-q3>
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EeJDRuntPgenqAtGa0t-aGAXNGgbdne6/view?usp=sharing>