

**TERMS & POLICIES OF DOCTORAL AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS****Academic Year: 2020-2021***Applicable to all Assistantships with  
contract periods ranging from 8/25/20 through 6/30/2021*

Acceptance of an Assistantship position indicates that you have read and agree to the *Terms of the Assistantship* as set forth in this document. This document contains university-wide policies and procedures that govern all Assistantships for students in master's or doctoral degree programs at Montclair State University (MSU).

For the purpose of this document, the terms "Assistant" and "Assistantship" will be used to refer to all students and position types. It is important to retain a copy of this document for your records, and to use it as a reference resource throughout your associated assistantship appointment. An electronic copy of this document is available on the Current Assistants website. Note that Terms are subject to change. Please be sure to keep the most current document as your resource.

**I. Purpose:** Assistantships are designed to provide financial support and research or teaching opportunities for graduate degree-seeking students. Assignments must be directly related to research or instructional activities in the student's field of study, or appropriate clinical/field work.

**II. Appointment Process**

- a. In order to be considered for an assistantship, a graduate student must have a *completed* application for the appropriate program. All University and departmental requirements for admission must be met, and an admissions decision must be issued by the appropriate department. The student must have confirmed that they will attend the program.
- b. This document outlines the terms of the assistantship; it is not a guarantee of placement. Once placed, an assistantship position is subject to termination for any reason, at the discretion of the Graduate Program Coordinator, Doctoral Program Director, Department Chairperson, or College/School Dean's Office, with the approval of The Graduate School (TGS).
- c. Recommendations for assistantships are given to The Graduate School by the academic departments. The Graduate School verifies that the student being recommended to a position is eligible to hold an assistantship and that the student's program of study is complemented by the assistantship. **No appointment is official or recognized by the University without final confirmation and approval by The Graduate School.**
- d. The Graduate School will notify all students recommended and eligible for an assistantship in writing with a formal *Offer of Appointment* and *Acceptance Agreement for Assistants* (herein referred to as *Acceptance Agreement*). **No student may begin an assistantship before signing and accepting the *Acceptance Agreement* through The Graduate School.**
- e. **Deadline to accept an Assistantship offer:** In accordance with the Council of Graduate School's *April 15 Resolution* ([http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGSResolution\\_RevisedOct2017.pdf](http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGSResolution_RevisedOct2017.pdf)), students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15. Beyond this date,

students are required to respond to offers within 15 business days of the date appearing on the *Offer of Appointment*.

- f. In order to receive compensation for and to finalize the Assistantship hiring process, the following conditions must be satisfied:
- i. Formal acceptance into an appropriate graduate degree program at MSU.
  - ii. An official recommendation for appointment from the hiring department to The Graduate School.
  - iii. An *Offer of Appointment* letter from The Graduate School.
  - iv. Timely return of *Acceptance Agreement* to The Graduate School acknowledging acceptance of the assistantship as outlined.
  - v. Completed I-9 (Eligibility to Work) form through the Human Resources (HR) office.
  - vi. Completed direct deposit (DD) form through the Human Resources office. Note that if an assistantship compensation package covers tuition only, and does not include a stipend, it is still recommended that students submit the DD form to Human Resources at the time of hire. If the DD form is not submitted to Human Resources upon initial hire as an Assistant with any compensation package, it is the student's responsibility to submit the DD form if a future compensation package should include a stipend.
  - vii. Completion of all on-boarding tasks (for students whose compensation packages include a stipend). These tasks must be completed through [Workday](#) after the *Acceptance Agreement* has been submitted to and processed by The Graduate School. Tasks may vary depending on a student's employment history with MSU, but necessary tasks will be listed in the Workday Inbox upon login. Example tasks include, but are not limited to tax withholding and personal contact information. Workday Support can be contacted at [workday@montclair.edu](mailto:workday@montclair.edu).
  - viii. Visa with valid work permit and employment verification (International students only).
    1. International students may not, under any circumstances, begin working in an assistantship without the proper required work authorization.
    2. All international students who have been appointed to an assistantship must visit [Office of International Engagement](#) *each year of the appointment* to receive "Employment Verification" before the appointment may be finalized.
    3. International students whose work visa is ending before the end of the terms of their assistantship should contact The Graduate School and their supervisor in advance. Based on the end date of the work visa, The Graduate School will adjust the end of the assistantship and will prorate the stipend and tuition remission.
- g. All newly appointed Assistants are required to attend The Graduate School's Assistantship Orientation, hosted by The Graduate School, at the beginning of the academic year. Information on Orientation will be e-mailed to new Assistants in August and can be found on the [Current Assistants](#) website at that time. Students appointed after Orientation has taken place must contact the Graduate Student Assistance Coordinator for information on otherwise fulfilling this requirement.

### **III. Length and Time Frame of Graduate Assistantship Appointment**

- a. Appointments are generally made for **one academic year (August 25 through June 30)**. One-semester appointments may be made to fill a vacancy or at the discretion of the academic department. Individual student contract periods are articulated on the *Acceptance Agreement* and may have different start and end dates based on the departmental needs.
- b. If a student is offered and accepts a full year assistantship, but graduates in January, it is the student's responsibility to notify TGS of their impending graduation date by December 1<sup>st</sup>. In this case, the

student's final day of work will be December 31<sup>st</sup>. If the student fails to do so, their compensation will be prorated based on their final day of work, as opposed to their completion of a Fall-only assistantship assignment. This will result in a reduced funding package.

- c. If a student is graduating in May, they are still held to the dates of their appointment which may be after graduation, unless the student submits a request to end their assistantship as of an earlier date. Students should discuss with their supervisor any changes to the final date of their assistantship.
- d. Limits to appointment:
  - i. Master's students may be appointed as a Graduate Assistant for up to a maximum of two (2) academic years (4 semesters).
  - ii. Doctoral students may be appointed as a Doctoral Assistant for up to a maximum of four (4) academic years (8 semesters).
  - iii. If a student's Assistantship is fully grant-funded, they may be exempt from the limits to appointment at the discretion of their Assistantship Supervisor and Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director.

Reappointment to the Assistantship beyond the initial contract term is at the discretion of the department and the Dean of The Graduate School. The department should first consider recommending students who have been previously appointed and have performed satisfactorily.

- e. Assistants are required to be available to work throughout the entirety of the contract period, with the exception of the University's holiday closure in December/January. **This includes winter break, spring break, and through the month of June.** Specific work schedules must be determined with the Assistantship Supervisor.

#### IV. Assignments

- a. **Assignments must be consistent with the goals and objectives of the student's academic program.** Assignments must be directly involved with faculty research, the instructional functions of the University, or clinical/field work as appropriate.
  - i. If the Assistant has instructional support responsibilities, it will be under the guidance of the department chairperson or designated faculty member.
  - ii. Non-instructional responsibilities will be under the guidance of the Assistantship faculty mentor. Doctoral students may only be assigned to doctoral faculty members.
- b. **Weekly Service Hours (WSH).** Assistants are required to provide up to **twenty (20) hours per week of service (WSH)**. Assistantship packages are determined by the academic department. If an agreement is for more than 15 WSH, the student must maintain a minimum of 9 credits per semester. The Details of the appointment include the number of credits that are required for their appointment. All Assistants should be reasonably available to benefit from their interaction with faculty, researchers, and other students. Individual required WSH are articulated on the *Acceptance Agreement*. These will be commensurate with the associated compensation.
- c. General duties of the assistantship are listed on the offer letter and your final appointment letter. In addition, Faculty Mentors or Administrative Supervisors will provide each of their assigned Assistants with a detailed outline of their individual responsibilities within a reasonable time frame. These responsibilities may not interfere with the student's academic program and may not include clerical support or personal work for their supervisor or department.

- d. **Logs.** The Graduate School does not collect logs from Assistants. Assistants are not required to submit hours into Workday in order to be paid. It is the student's responsibility to establish a routine for logging their WSH with their assigned supervisor, department, and/or College/School.
- e. If an assignment-related issue arises, it is recommended that the Assistant first attempt to resolve it with their Faculty Mentor. If the issue cannot be resolved with the Mentor, the Assistant may contact the Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director, then the Department Chairperson, followed by the College/School Dean's Office. If the issue cannot be resolved in this way, the Assistant may contact the Graduate Student Assistance Coordinator of The Graduate School.

## V. Restrictions and Limitations

### a. **Additional on-campus employment.**

- i. Students holding an assistantship with 15-20 weekly hours of service required are **not permitted to hold any additional on-campus employment during the fall and spring semester(s)** associated with their contract period. There are no exceptions to this policy. You may refer to the [Human Resources Student Employment Policy](#).
  - ii. Students holding an assistantship with 1-14 hours of Weekly Service Hours required are permitted to hold additional, specific on-campus employment during the Fall and Spring semester(s) associated with their contract period with The Graduate School's approval, in writing, prior to the initiation of the dual assignment(s). Approval must be sought by the student's Graduate Program Coordinator or Doctoral Program Director prior to requesting approval from The Graduate School. Additional on campus employment can not exceed 20 hours per week in total including the assistantship WSH during the academic year.
  - iii. **All** assistants **may be hired during the summer term. During the period between the last day of spring classes and the end of the contract period (June 30<sup>th</sup>)**, Assistants may be hired under certain conditions. This is in addition to your WSH required by the assistantship. A student may not work more than 35 hours per week in total. The conditions are:
    - 1. As an adjunct instructor.
      - a. Assistants may be hired as adjuncts for one course (3-4 credits) or equivalent during the May summer pre-session while serving in the assistantship upon approval of TGS;
      - b. Assistants may be hired as adjuncts for up to two courses (total of 6-8 credits) or equivalent during the regular summer session while serving in the assistantship upon approval of The Graduate School.
    - 2. Assistants may be hired specifically to work with faculty to conduct research funded from a grant. Such responsibilities may be filled through hours beyond the weekly hours of service required by the assistantship/fellowship, but may not exceed a total of 35 hours per week during this period of time.
  - iv. University Assistantship funding cannot be applied to Full-Time employees under any circumstance.
- b. Students who are student teaching (i.e. enrolled in Clinical Practice/Experience II, or comparable full-time student teaching experience) are **not** eligible to hold an assistantship during the term in which they are student teaching. There are **NO** exceptions to this policy. It is important to speak with your Graduate Assistant Supervisor if this pertains to your program (**i.e., Master of Arts in Teaching**).
- i. The assistantship will be stopped at the point of registration for the student teaching sequence.
  - ii. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Assistantship Supervisor and The Graduate School of any impending student teaching coursework that may conflict with the Assistantship

contract period well in advance of the student teaching semester so the student's contract can be updated accordingly.

- c. **Simultaneous scholarship funding.** If a student accepts an assistantship, the student is **not** eligible for any other University or Montclair State University Foundation scholarship which offers an overlapping financial award. An exception will be made to allow students to be eligible to receive funding from a MSU Foundation scholarship in conjunction with University assistantship funding if:
  - i. such an arrangement is permitted by the parameters outlined for the specific University Foundation award in question;
  - ii. the nature of the combined awards will not result in a refund from the Student Accounts office based on either form of funding;
  - iii. approval is given by both The Graduate School and the MSU Foundation office in writing in advance.

## **VI. Course Load and Academic Requirements for Assistants**

- a. Assistants must maintain continuous enrollment in their degree program during their contract period.
- b. As indicated in item IV.b., WSH requirements are articulated on the *Acceptance Agreement*. Students must maintain the appropriate enrollment status associated with their WSH for each Fall and Spring semester associated with their assistantship. Details of the requisite course load for each Fall and Spring semester are listed below.
  - i. **15-20 WSH:** Students are required to register for a minimum of nine (9) semester hours of course work each semester, unless they have an approved [Assistantship Underenrollment Request Form](#) on file for the semester in question, prior to the end of the appropriate Add/Drop period. Students are eligible for Underenrollment through this mechanism once during the course of their assistantship. Note that students are automatically approved for Underenrollment if they are enrolled in any of the following courses for any number of credits:
    - 1. XXXX-698/699: Thesis Advisement/Extension
    - 2. XXXX-900/901: Dissertation Advisement/Extension
  - ii. **1-14 WSH:** Students will have different requirements for the amount of credits they need to maintain for each semester. They are written on your offer and Details page.
- c. Assistants are not permitted to register for more than **twelve (12) semester hours** each fall and/or spring semester unless they have an approved [Course Overload Application](#) on file for the semester in question, prior to the end of the appropriate Add/Drop period. An Assistant's Course Overload Application will not be approved for more than 16 credits hours per semester, unless required by the academic program.
  - i. Assistants who are approved for a course overload will not receive an adjustment in their compensation package and will be responsible for any additional tuition or fees incurred, as appropriate.
  - ii. Exceptions to the overload credit limit may be made on a case-by-case basis, or as required by the student's program of study.
- d. Assistants are responsible for following all University policies, deadlines, and procedures as stated by University offices (e.g., Registrar, Student Accounts, Financial Aid), or set forth in the *Graduate Policy Manual*, *University Catalog*, *Student Handbook*, and *Schedule of Courses* (i.e. dropping classes, withdrawal, etc.), accessible via The Graduate School's [Academic Policies, Procedures, & Guidelines](#) website.

- e. To remain eligible for an assistantship, Assistants must maintain full matriculation in a degree program with a minimum cumulative **GPA of 3.0 (master's students) or 3.2 (doctoral students)** in their program of study. **A student on Academic Probation will be subject to termination upon review by the Dean of the Graduate School. Violations of academic policies may result in immediate termination, including prorating the Assistantship offer.**

## **VII. Tuition and University-wide Fee Remission (if applicable)**

- a. Assistantship Tuition Remission will cover **up to** the number of credits and per credit fees indicated on the *Acceptance Agreement*, over the course of the contract period associated with the appropriate academic year (Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer).
  - i. If an Assistant drops a course or courses after the 100% withdrawal deadline, the lost credits cannot be reused. If the course withdrawal causes the Assistant to drop below the prescribed enrollment requirement, the student will be removed from the Assistantship **and** the student will be responsible for paying the tuition for that semester.
  - ii. Tuition Remission *may* cover summer courses only if the Assistant has not used all allocated Tuition Remission, and as long as the student remains enrolled in the appropriate degree program during the course of the summer term. The Summer Term refers to the term *after* the end of the contract period, not before.
- b. Assistants may choose to take less than their allocated Tuition Remission in an academic year. However, if an Assistant chooses to take less than their allocated Remission during the defined contract period, the remaining Remission **may not** be applied to courses taken in future semesters.
- c. The number of credits taken in each semester (up to the semester/annual maximum) should be determined in consultation between the student and advisor.
- d. Tuition and University-wide fee remission explanation.
  - i. University-wide fees that **are** eligible for inclusion in remission include: Per credit fees, such as the Graduate Student Services, Facilities, and Computer Technology Fees.
  - ii. Fees **not** eligible for inclusion in remission include: Fees that pertain to an individual student or fees associated with specific courses (i.e. studio fees, materials, books, parking, health/medical insurance, lab fees, international student fee, and graduation fee).
- e. University funded tuition remission is intended to cover credit-bearing coursework that counts toward the student's degree program only.
  - i. The following types of coursework are examples of coursework that are not eligible for tuition remission. Note that this list is not exhaustive.
    - 1. Thesis Extension (XXXX-699) or Dissertation Extension (XXXX-901).
    - 2. Coursework contributing to a certificate program that is not required for the degree program.
    - 3. Audited coursework.
  - ii. It is the student's responsibility to:
    - 1. inform The Graduate School, in writing, of enrollment outside of their required coursework prior to the end of the associated Add/Drop period;
    - 2. cover all expenses associated with any unrelated coursework according to the deadlines and procedures posted by the Office of Student Accounts.

- f. If an Assistant resigns or is terminated prior to the end of their contract period, their compensation (stipend and/or tuition remission, as applicable) will be prorated based on the proportion of the contract period completed by the Assistant.
- g. If an Assistant begins after the first week of the contract term (i.e., the first week of September or the first week of January, as appropriate), their compensation will be prorated based on the proportion of the traditional contract period (8/25 – 6/30; 8/25 – 12/31; 1/1 – 6/30) reflected on the *Acceptance Agreement*. The prorated compensation will be reflected on the *Acceptance Agreement* as well.
- h. While Assistants may receive tuition remission, it is imperative that ALL Assistants verify their account balance online through [NEST](#). Any expenses incurred beyond those covered by the Assistantship are the student's responsibility and must be addressed by the Student Accounts deadlines or will be subject to a late fee. Assistantship Tuition Remission will be applied by the end of the second week of each semester. Please make sure you address any discrepancies in your NEST account with the Graduate Student Assistance Coordinator before the end of the semester.
- i. **The cost of University Health Insurance** for Assistants is **not covered** by the Assistantship. Visit the [Student Health Insurance](#) website for information on this topic. All students registered for 6 or more credits per semester must have health insurance. The university health insurance will be charged to your account automatically. If you have private insurance, you can waive the University-provided insurance by filling out the insurance waiver form

## VIII. Stipend (if applicable)

- a. An Assistant may receive a stipend as indicated on the *Acceptance Agreement*, provided that the Assistant remains in that position for the entire contract period.
- b. Social Security and withholding for state and federal or international taxes will be deducted from this stipend. Be aware:
  - i. Enrollment status may impact the tax rates and availability of deductions.
  - ii. The University cannot provide a student with tax advice. Questions about tax obligations must be addressed by a student's personal tax advisor, counsel, or the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.
  - iii. Assistantship Tuition Remission is not taxed.
- c. Assistants will receive stipend installments bi-weekly during their contract period. Assistantship Pay dates can be found on the [Current Assistants](#) website prior to September 1<sup>st</sup> each year.
- d. New Jersey law requires that all MSU employees receive their paychecks through Direct Deposit. Contact [Payroll Services](#) for further information.
- e. The Office of Student Financial Aid is required by law to consider the estimated value of the academic year tuition and fee remission when determining eligibility for financial aid including student loans. Acceptance of an assistantship may affect the amount of financial aid allocated. Contact [Financial Aid](#) for further information.

## IX. Exiting the Graduate Assistantship

- a. The Assistantship appointment may be terminated upon recommendation of the Graduate Program Coordinator, Doctoral Program Director, Department Chair, Dean of the Academic College/School or other administrator, with approval of the Dean of The Graduate School.
- b. Students should be aware of the [Medical Withdrawal Policy](#) and [Student Pregnancy Policy](#) of Montclair State University. If an Assistant is in need of accommodation, the policies will be applied as appropriate. Please inform The Graduate School of any accommodations provided.
- c. If, for any reason, an Assistant resigns or is terminated prior to the end of the assistantship contract period, the following conditions apply:
  - i. The stipend (if applicable) will be prorated based on the proportion of the contract period completed by the Assistant. The student's final day of work will dictate the effective date that the prorated stipend is based on.
  - ii. Tuition (if applicable)
    1. If the resignation/termination takes place after the last day of classes for a specific semester, tuition waiver for that semester remains in place.
    2. If the resignation/termination takes effect *during a semester*, tuition waiver will be prorated based on the proportion of the contract period completed by the Assistant. The student's Account will be updated to reflect the remaining tuition/fee balance for the semester in question.
    3. If a student resigns from the assistantship and withdraws from all courses after the 100% withdrawal deadline, the student will be responsible for paying any prorated tuition and fee costs.
    4. If the Assistant chooses to resign, **two weeks written notice of resignation** must be sent to the Assistantship Supervisor with a copy to The Graduate School.
- d. The Graduate School encourages all Assistants to complete a questionnaire, available on the Current Graduate Assistants website prior to the end of each semester. They are encouraged to reflect upon their experiences as an Assistant or Fellow and provide candid information. The results are used by TGS in its on-going evaluation of the Assistantship Program. ***All information collected is for TGS's use only, and any identifying information will be kept confidential.***