

TERMS & POLICIES OF DOCTORAL AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS**Academic Year: 2021-2022***Applicable to all Assistantships with
contract periods ranging from 9/1/2021 through 6/30/2022*

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 of the Graduate Assistantships

The goal of the Assistantship Program at Montclair State University is to promote MSU's academic programs and student development by recruiting academically talented graduate students, supporting faculty research and other initiatives, and enhancing graduate education. For graduate assistants, the opportunity to work closely with faculty members and undergraduate students in teaching, research, or administrative environments is an integral part of their education at MSU. A graduate student's main objective is to earn a graduate degree; GA responsibilities should not interfere with a student's reasonable progress toward completion of their programs.

Graduate students who hold assistantships benefit academically and professionally. Depending on the type of assistantship, they will enhance their research skills; develop pedagogical skills; and acquire experience in leadership, interpersonal effectiveness, and other administrative experience; and gain access to opportunities that may result in joint publications and other future professional activities. Skills learned in assistantships prepare students not only for the academic environment but for professional endeavors in a wide range of organizations.

II. Orientation

All newly appointed Assistants are required to attend The Graduate School's Assistantship Orientation, hosted by The Graduate School, at the beginning of your first appointed term. 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. Failure to attend Orientation does not exempt the student from being responsible for all policies and procedures relating to the assistantship.

III. Length and Time Frame of Graduate Assistantship Appointment

- a. Appointments are made for **one academic year (September 1 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 1st. In this case, the student's final day of work will be January 14. 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 that may be after graduation, unless the student submits a request and The Graduate School approves 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. Students are usually appointed on an annual basis (9/1-6/30), with the possibility of reappointment for up to four semesters total (Masters) or eight semesters total (Doctoral). Mid-year appointments may be made to fill vacancies as needed. Students must remain in their position for the full term of the assistantship, usually 9/1- 6/30, in order to receive full compensation.
- e. 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.
- f. Reappointment to the Assistantship beyond the initial contract term is at the discretion of the department and the Dean of The Graduate School or designee. The departments are expected to first consider recommending students who have been previously appointed and have performed satisfactorily.
- g. . Assistants will not be responsible for working the following weeks; the week of Thanksgiving; the last two weeks of December and Spring Break. This may be adjusted as per the supervisor based on needs, but will result in equal time off. Specific work schedules must be determined with the Assistantship Supervisor.

IV. Assignments

- a. **Assignments should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the student's academic program.** Whenever possible, assignments must be directly involved with faculty research, the instructional and administrative functions of the University, or clinical/field work as appropriate.
 - i. If the Assistant has instructional support responsibilities, those 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 supervisor or mentor. Doctoral students may only be assigned to doctoral faculty members.
- b. **Classification of Assistantship Positions.** Assistants will be classified into one of three possible classifications based on the job duties. They are:
 - i. **Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA).** Provide instructional support to the faculty of record; the student's work will take place under the supervision of this faculty of record. Priority is given to larger courses, usually to course sections of 90+ students in each of the Fall and Spring semesters. The duties below may be limited based on instructional responsibilities. Students appointed for this position cannot be the instructor of record, and will have one or more of the following responsibilities, depending on the type of course:
 - Coordinate, lead, or assist in the instructional process in preparation and direct interaction with students.
 - Meet with students and teach during office hours.
 - Grade assignments and exams.
 - Proctor exams.
 - Provide academic advising to students during office hours.
 - Supervise undergraduate student work in labs.
 - ii. **Graduate Administrative Assistants (GAA):** Perform assignments primarily of an administrative or institutional support nature, so long as these activities explicitly further the professional development of the GA. Examples of inappropriate duties for a GA may include, but are not limited to: personal services for a supervisor; administrative work that doesn't advance professional development, such as receptionist or filing work; maintaining the personal computer of a supervisor; cleaning up after a department function or meeting.
 - iii. **Graduate Research Assistants (GRA):** Support faculty with research projects, fieldwork, clinical work, or the preparation of a research proposal or research materials. Specific tasks may vary according to the discipline and type of project, and may include assisting the faculty to: collect and analyze data; prepare materials for submission to granting agencies and foundations; prepare manuscripts for publication or presentation at research conferences; attend project meetings; and write project reports.
- c. **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 or more 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.

- d. 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.
- e. **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.
- f. If an assignment-related issue arises, it is recommended that the Assistant first attempt to resolve it with their Supervisor. If the issue cannot be resolved with the Supervisor, the Assistant may contact the Mentor, 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 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. Assistants may not work more than 20 hours per week during the academic term. If a student is assigned to less than 20 WSH for their assistantship, it may be possible to hold another on campus job. The Graduate School must approve of this arrangement before beginning the additional assignment.
 - iii. Since assistantships do not cover the summer months, students may work on campus at their discretion.
 - iv. During the period between the last day of spring classes and the end of the contract period (June 30th), Assistants may be hired for additional on campus work. Their assigned WSH must be completed first and the total work hours can not exceed 35 hours. Permission from The Graduate must be received before beginning the dual assignment.
 - v. 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 terminated once registration for the course takes place.
 - 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.c., WSH and associated time-status 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 9 credit 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:
 - XXXX-698/699: Thesis Advisement/Extension
 - 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. Students must maintain the enrollment status indicated below. Exceptions can be made based on course availability, prerequisites, or remaining coursework, at the discretion of The Graduate School: Masters level students are required to enroll in a minimum of 9

credits per semester if receiving a full Graduate Assistantship. Partial Graduate Assistantships required to be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits per semester.

- d. Assistants are not permitted to register for more than **twelve (12) credit 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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 or designee. 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. In addition, the Summer course must begin before June 30 and all tuition remission, if any, must be applied by that date.

- 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 a given 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 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. Eligible coursework: Assistantship tuition remission will not cover audited coursework or coursework outside of the GA's degree program. If a GA chooses to enroll in coursework outside of their degree program, it is their responsibility to notify The Graduate School accordingly. If the student does not notify The Graduate School prior to the end of the associated Add/Drop period, they will be responsible for any late fees associated with payment for the course(s) in question, and their assistantship appointment will be subject to termination at the discretion of the Graduate Dean or designee.
- f. The following types of coursework are examples of coursework that are not eligible for tuition remission. Note that this list is not exhaustive.
 - Thesis Extension (XXXX-699) or Dissertation Extension (XXXX-901).
 - Coursework contributing to a certificate program that is not required for the degree program.
 - Audited coursework.
- g. It is the student's responsibility to:
 - i. Inform The Graduate School in writing of enrollment outside of their required coursework prior to the end of the associated Add/Drop period.
 - ii. Cover all expenses associated with any unrelated coursework according to the deadlines and procedures posted by the Office of Student Accounts.
- h. 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.
- i. If an Assistant begins after the first week of the contract term (i.e., the first week of September or the third week of January, as appropriate), their compensation will be prorated based on the proportion of the traditional contract period (9/1 – 6/30; 9/1 – 1/14;

1/18 – 6/30) reflected on the *Acceptance Agreement*. The prorated compensation will be sent as a notification of adjustment to the original agreement.

- j. 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.
- k. **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 full-time students must have health insurance. 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 (full-time, half-time, or part-time) may impact the tax rates and availability of deductions.
 - ii. The University cannot provide a student 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 Paydates can be found on the [Current Assistants](#) website prior to September 1st 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 or designee.
- 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 as dictated by the student's final day of work.
 - 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.

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.***

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