



## **TERMS & POLICIES OF DOCTORAL AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS**

**Academic Year: 2024-2025**

*Applicable to all Assistantships with contract periods ranging from 8/26/2024 through 6/28/2025.*

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 hired via The Graduate School. 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 and Training**

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 [Information on Orientation 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.

In addition, all Assistants (new and returning) must attend Assistantship Orientation, Training and Development on August 26th, 2024. (GAs who are teaching in 24-25 must attend training co-sponsored by TGS & Office of Faculty Excellence).

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

- A. Appointments are made for **one academic year (August 26 through June 27)**. One-semester appointments may be made to fill a vacancy or at the discretion of the academic department.

Individual student contract periods are articulated in the *Acceptance Agreement* and may have different start and end dates based on the departmental needs or the date the student is offered the position. Students must remain in their position for the full term of the assistantship, usually 8/26 - 6/28, in order to receive full compensation.

B. Students who graduate in January or May, are still held to the dates of the applicable semester. Generally, the Friday before classes begin in January and the last Friday in June.

1. Exceptions:

a. Graduating students may seek to end their GA work period early, by submitting a request to TGS with at least two week's notice. If approved, there will be a reduction in the total stipend amount.

b. Graduating international students are prohibited from working beyond their last day of class which is generally 5-6 weeks earlier than the end of work period. There will be a commensurate reduction in stipend.

C. Assistantships carry the possibility of reappointment for up to four semesters total (Masters) or eight semesters total (Doctoral). 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 before recommending new students.

D. 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.

- E. Assistants will not be responsible for working the following weeks; the week of Thanksgiving (This may be adjusted by the supervisor based on needs but will result in equal time off. Specific work schedules must be determined with the Assistantship Supervisor), two weeks of Semester Break, and Spring Break.

#### **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.

1. If the Assistant has instructional support responsibilities, those will be under the guidance of the department chairperson or designated faculty member.
2. Non-instructional responsibilities will be under the guidance of the Assistantship Supervisor. Doctoral students may only be assigned to doctoral faculty members.

- B. **Classification of Assistantship Positions.** Assistants will be classified into one of four possible classifications based on their job duties. They are:

1. **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 (exceptions may be requested) 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.

**Doctoral Assistants** may be assigned as “Instructor of Record” meaning they will be the sole or primary instructor of a credit-bearing course.

2. **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 maintaining the personal computer of a supervisor; cleaning up after a department function or meeting, if professional staff are not also performing those duties.
3. **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.

4. **Graduate Student Support Assistants:** Plan and implement activities that support the academic and personal success of undergraduate and/or graduate students.

### C. **Weekly Service Hours (WSH)**

1. **Doctoral 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 15 or more WSH, the student must maintain a minimum of 9 credits per semester or any number of Dissertation Advisement/Dissertation Ext Credits. The details of the appointment include the number of credits that are required for the appointment and required WSH. These will be commensurate with the associated compensation.
2. **Master's Assistants** are required to provide **twenty (20) hours per week of service (WSH) for a full package, or ten (10) hours per week of service (WSH) for a half package. (A full package requires enrollment of 9 credits per semester and a half package requires enrollment of 6 credits per semester)**. Assistantship packages are determined by the academic department.

D. All Assistants should be reasonably available to benefit from their interaction with faculty, researchers, and other students. This is done by working on-campus, usually during normal operating hours.

E. General duties of the assistantship are listed on the offer letter and final appointment letter. In addition, 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.

- F. **Time-Keeping.** Assistants are not required to submit hours into Workday to be paid. It is the supervisor's responsibility to establish a routine for the GA logging their WSH.
- G. 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, Doctoral Program Director, or Department Chairperson. 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

1. 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.
2. 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 this arrangement before beginning the additional assignment.
3. During the period between the last day of spring classes and the end of the contract period (June 28), Assistants may be hired for additional on campus work. Their assigned WSH must be completed first and the total work hours cannot exceed 30 hours. Permission from The Graduate School must be received before beginning the dual assignment.
4. University Assistantship funding cannot be applied to Full-Time employees under any circumstance.

## **B. Additional off-campus employment:**

It is expected that a GA's primary obligation is to their academic program, and secondary to that is the GA position. If a GA wishes to hold outside employment, approval should be sought from The Graduate School. The Graduate School will assess whether (or the extent) the position will interfere with GA responsibilities. The Graduate School may be able to make minor accommodations for approved employment but will not make accommodations for non-approved external employment.

## **C. MAT Students**

1. MAT 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**).
2. 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.
3. The assistantship will be terminated once TGS is aware that registration for the course takes place.

## **D. Simultaneous Scholarship Funding**

1. 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:

- a) Such an arrangement is permitted by the parameters outlined for the specific University Foundation award in question and
- b) The nature of the combined awards will not result in a refund from the Student Accounts office based on either form of funding and
- c) 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. Academic enrollment and status are articulated in 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.
  1. **15-20 WSH:** Doctoral 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 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
  2. XXXX-900/901: Dissertation Advisement
2. **1-14 WSH:** Doctoral students will have different requirements for the number of credits they need to maintain for each semester. They are written in your offer letter and accompanying details page.
  3. Master's students must maintain the enrollment status indicated below. Master's level students are required to enroll in a minimum of 9 credits per semester if receiving a full Graduate Assistantship, and Half Graduate Assistantships required to be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits per semester. Exceptions can be made based on course availability, prerequisites, or remaining coursework, at the discretion of The Graduate School.
- C. 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.
1. 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.
  2. 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 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, Spring, and Summer).
  1. 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.
  2. Tuition Remission *may* cover summer courses only if the Assistant has not used all allocated Tuition Remission, the course is required for their program, the course begins before June 30<sup>rd</sup>, 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. Use of these credits must be requested using the required form, by published deadlines.

3. Summer Tuition Remission is not automatically applied. Students must request Summer Tuition Remission via this [form](#) and submit it no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>. Tuition Remission will not be applied after June 30.
- B. Assistants may choose to take less than their allocated tuition remission in an academic year. However, if an Assistant chooses to take fewer than their allocated remission during the defined contract period, the remaining remission **may not** be applied to courses taken in future academic years.
- C. Available tuition remission will be split evenly between Fall and Spring. Assistants may not use any portion of their Fall allocation in the Spring nor their Spring allocation in the Fall.
1. **Exception:** DPDs may request uneven splits for doctoral students whose annual tuition remission is 9, 15 or 21 credits.
- D. Tuition and University-wide fee remission explanation.
1. University-wide fees that **are** eligible for inclusion in remission include: Per credit fees, such as the Student Services, Facilities, and Computer Technology Fees.
  2. 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. 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.
- Electives taken outside of the student's degree program.

F. Coursework Enrollment Guidelines:

1. If a GA chooses to enroll in coursework outside of their degree program, it is their responsibility to :
  - a) Inform The Graduate School in writing of enrolment outside of their required coursework prior to the end of the associated Add/Drop period.
  - b) Cover all expenses associated with any unrelated coursework according to the deadlines and procedures posted by the Office of Student Accounts. This includes any late fees that may be accrued if tuition remission is removed after payment deadlines.
2. Their assistantship appointment will be subject to termination at the discretion of the Graduate Dean or designee.

G. 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.

- H. If an Assistant begins after the first week of the work period (i.e., week of September 2, 2024, or the week of January 17, 2025), their compensation will be prorated based on the proportion of the traditional contract period reflected on the *Acceptance Agreement*. The prorated compensation will be sent as a notification of adjustment to the original agreement.
- I. 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 as soon as you become aware of it after the end of the add/drop period.

### 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, State and Federal or international taxes will be deducted from this stipend. Be aware: The University cannot provide 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.
- C. Assistants will receive stipend installments bi-weekly during their contract period, with the earliest possible pay date being September 13, 2024.
- D. Should the first installment be paid in a later pay period, the full stipend amount will be paid in even installments for the remainder of the work period.

- E. New Jersey law requires that all MSU employees receive their paychecks through Direct Deposit. Contact Payroll Services or further information.
- F. 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. **Termination:** The Assistantship appointment may be terminated for appropriate cause 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. **Resignation:** If, for any reason, an Assistant resigns or is terminated prior to the end of the assistantship contract period, the following conditions apply:
  - 1. 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.
  - 2. Tuition (if applicable)
    - a) If the resignation/termination takes place after the last day of classes for a specific semester, tuition waiver for that semester remains in place.
    - b) 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.

- c) 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.
- d) 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.

### **C. International Students (on FI or JI Visas)**

If an international student on these work visas is graduating during their assistantship, they are required to end their assistantship on the last day of classes. They will be unable to work until the June 28th end date. International students will be responsible for submitting their resignation and their stipend will be prorated to match the number of weeks of work completed.

## **X. Student Instructor Program**

### **A. Implementation: Fall 2024**

With the addition of the Student Instructor Program, all students assigned teaching duties across the University outside of a primary or doctoral assistantship must be hired using the Student Instructor Program (SIP). Students may not be hired into adjunct roles moving forward.

The Student Instructor Program (SIP) is an extension of the University's Assistantship Program, which has a primary mission of supporting students financially through job duties applicable to academic and career goals.



## **B. Definitions:**

**Associate Student Instructor:** Doctoral students with a completed Master's degree (or 30 credits beyond the Bachelor's degree) as teacher-of-record.

**Assistant Student Instructor:** Master's or Doctoral students with fewer than 30 credits post-Bachelor's degree, independently leading class sessions; or lab sessions under the mentorship of the department chair/GPC/DPD.

## **C. Administration:**

1. The hiring department will submit recommendations via the Graduate Faculty website.
2. The Graduate School will manage the administrative process: offer letters, work agreements, WorkDay entry.
3. Students will be paid according to the student-stipend payroll schedule. September 1 – January 10 (Fall); January 13 – May 23 (Spring); summer dates will vary.
4. All Student Instructors must be assigned a Faculty Supervisor/Mentor (the faculty member of record, or the Department Chair/GPC/DPD.)

## **D. Eligibility:**

1. Good academic standing
2. Regular admission status
3. Students who have used their maximum number of semesters of primary or Doctoral assistantship eligibility may be hired for the Student Instructor Position.

4. Minimum 3.2 GPA
5. Full-time enrollment or “forced” full-time by enrollment in any number of dissertation advisement or dissertation extension.

**E. Compensation:**

1. For 2024 – 2025 only: any Associate Student Instructor who was previously hired in an adjunct role will receive \$1825 per TCH.
2. Associate Student Instructor: Students with a completed master’s degree (enrolled in a second Master’s degree or Doctoral program) will receive \$1500 per TCH.
3. Assistant Student Instructor: Students without a completed Master’s degree or 30 credits post-masters will receive \$1350 per TCH.
4. Labs are compensated at 0.66 TCH.

**F. Other Terms:**

1. The University reserves the right to remove a student from the Student Instructor position if it deems that doing so is in the best interest of the instructor, the students enrolled in the course, or the academic program.
2. Assignment as a Student Instructor in one semester carries no promise of assignment in future semesters.
3. Student Instructors will be required to participate in orientation and/or development activities required by The Graduate School and possible additional training provided by the appointing department or college.

4. Approximately 3 hours of work per week is expected per credit taught (2 hours for lab sections).
5. Exceptions to the 20 hour-per-week limit for doctoral students can be requested through the Graduate School.
6. Exceptions to the requirement of full-time study may be requested for a student who is in a semester of approved course “underload”, according to published policy.
7. Any semester assigned solely as Student Instructor does not reduce a student’s eligibility for a primary or doctoral assistantship in future semesters.
8. These will be 9-month positions; students may be granted additional teaching responsibilities after the Spring semester ends.
9. Students do not have to be enrolled in the summer session in which they are asked to teach.

**G. Teaching Load:** Depends upon whether the student solely is a Student Instructor or has a combination of Student Instructor and Primary GA/DA roles.

**1. Not in conjunction with a Primary GA or a Doctoral Assistantship:**

A student who is not also a primary GA or doctoral assistant can be assigned by the appropriate department to teach maximum number of credits per semester (Fall, Spring, Summer), as follows:

- a. 6 credits for **Associate Student Instructor** (Doctoral students with a Master’s degree or 30 credits post Bachelor’s degree) not also funded by a Doctoral Assistantship.

- b. 6 credits for **Assistant Student Instructor** (Master's students or Doctoral students with fewer than 30 credits post Bachelor's degree) not also funded by a Primary Assistantship.

Note: Winter session teaching assignments will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**2. In addition to a partial Primary GA or a Doctoral Assistantship:**

For students receiving a partial Primary GA or Doctoral Assistantship, a Student Instructor position may also be granted, if the required weekly hours will total 20 or fewer. In the case of GA/DA plus Student Instructor, the maximum additional teaching load is 3 credits per semester.

This is applicable whether the DA position is funded by The Graduate School or an external grant.

- a. 3 credits for Associate Student Instructors also receiving a partial Doctoral Assistantship package for the same semester.
- b. 3 credits for Assistant Student Instructors funded by a half-Primary Assistantship.