

Understanding and Making the Most of Your Assistantship



<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/assistantships.html>

<https://policies.vt.edu/6210.pdf>



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Get
assistantship
contract offer

Accept contract in
Graduate Contract
System

Communicate with
assistantship supervisor
about reporting to work,
assignments and
expectations

Department pays
tuition remission and
sets up stipend
payment, which
triggers out-of-state
waiver if applicable

Semester begins...



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Standard Compensation

- Monthly stipend (approved annually by the Board of Visitors; rate is dependent on departmental practices and availability of funding)
- In-state tuition and program fees, prorated by length and percentage of appointment
 - Tuition bill – if paid late by department, they can request waiver of late fee from the Bursar's Office
- Out-of-state tuition waiver (if you earn at least \$2000 on assistantship stipend during the semester)
- Health insurance subsidy for coverage of single student (family coverage available but not subsidized)
 - <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/assistantships/benefits.html>
- Comp fee payment plan (different from Budget Tuition Plan)
- Standard contract start/end dates to provide 9 full paychecks in each semester. Contract start/end dates may be different from actual work start/end dates.
- Work-Life grant program: <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/funding-information-for-departments/work-life-grants.html>



Maintaining Eligibility

- Enroll full-time in your degree program (12-18 credit hours/semester)
 - Audited hours do not count
 - Monitored for entire semester; will be notified if dropping below
 - Research, independent study, incompletes, P/F courses are ok
- Maintain 3.0 or better GPA; exceptions possible with departmental support
- Meet employment eligibility requirements
- Fulfill contractual obligations at acceptable performance level

Students on a full assistantship (100%, 1 FTE), are expected to work an average of 20 hours/week during their contract period. Students enrolled in Research & Dissertation (R & D) credit hours are expected to exert significant time and effort toward earning those credits in addition to fulfilling their assistantship duties.



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Additional Benefits

- Professional development; skill building – discipline-specific **and** general
 - Communication
 - Team work
 - Problem-solving
 - Public speaking/presentations
 - ...
- Access to world-class equipment, resources and minds
- Opportunity to build professional network, secure job references



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Are you prepared?

- Did you read the assistantship contract before signing it?
- Did you understand it all?
- Did you ask for any clarification or additional information?
- Did you have a conversation with your supervisor about expectations?



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Expectations

- First and last day of work (may be different from standard contract start/end dates)
- Work location and expectations for each option:
 - Physical location | Hybrid | Remote
- Work schedule:
 - Office or lab hours, if any
 - Recurring meetings
- Communication
 - Frequency
 - Preferred method
- Departmental resources
 - Access to work area, lounge, equipment, mail, etc
 - Supervisor(s) and support for position
- Major tasks and responsibilities
- Deadlines and deliverables



Communication with Advisor/Supervisor

Seek to understand expectations, ask questions:

- When/where to report to work; requirements during breaks
- Performance expectations
- Supervisor's communication style and preferences
- Times off for illness or personal reasons

Treat assistantship as work:

- If not assigned a schedule, create schedule for yourself with deadlines and deliverables
- Proactively identify and carry out productive tasks and occasionally report progress to your supervisor
- If uncertain about a task, offer potential approaches as you seek clarification
- Track your hours and seek guidance/adjustment of workload from your supervisor if you consistently work more (or less) than an average of 20 hrs/wk

Understand personal priorities, preferences, and tolerance levels (your own and your supervisor's):

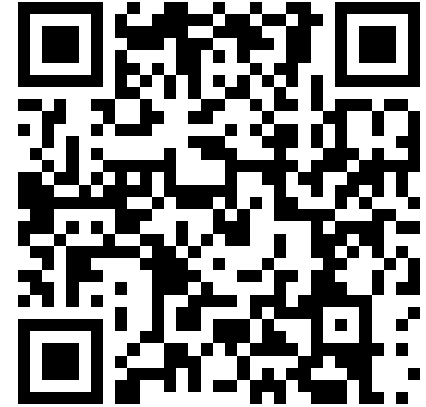
- Communication style – direct/indirect; verbal/written; regular/ad hoc; ...
- Management style – micro/macro; laissez-faire; ...
- What's important to you: funding or relationship or project or present/future or ...

Seek acceptable compromise if there are differences between your needs/aspirations and your supervisor's



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Resources



- Graduate School: grads@vt.edu; gibsonm@vt.edu
- <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/assistantships.html>
- Where to find assistantship postings:
<https://glcweekly.graduateschool.vt.edu/>
- Graduate Ombudsperson: <https://www.graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/>
- Job search assistance: <https://career.vt.edu/job-search/Handshake.html> --
also accessible to VT alumni for a couple of years after graduation



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