

Understanding and Making the Most of Your Assistantship

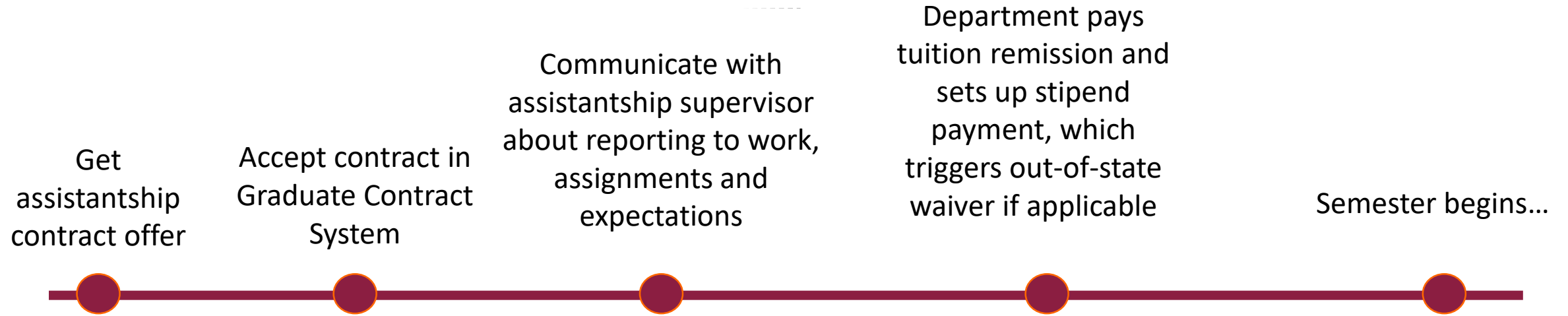


<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/assistantships.html>

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



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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>



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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

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



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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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