

Graduate Assistant Handbook

Revised Spring 2021

Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a Graduate Assistant! This brief document is intended to provide you with helpful information to successfully navigate this experience.

Graduate Assistantships are an advantage to the student and an asset to the college. While you learn helpful workforce skills and enhance learning in your field of study, you also provide a service to your educational community.

Please note that the information contained in this handbook is not exhaustive, and if you have additional questions or need clarification, you should contact the Saremi Center at saremicenter@aic.edu or 413.654.1411.

The Perks

As a GA, you receive some great benefits. You will enjoy some (*but probably not all*) of these:

- Tuition Remission
- Pay
- Room waiver
- Meal waiver
- Textbook voucher

Here are the details:

1. Tuition Remission means some or all of your tuition is paid by AIC. GAs get **up to** 18 credit hours per year of tuition remission at the rate of MBA program credit hours. If a GA is in a program with a higher credit hour charge than the MBA rate, they pay the difference.
2. Pay – GA's earn either a stipend (predetermined amount of money) or an hourly wage. GAs work up to 20 hours per week during academic periods and up to 35 hours per week during breaks.
3. Room Waiver means the cost of a double room on campus may be included in some GA packages. If a GA chooses to live in a room that costs more, they pay the difference.
4. Meal Waiver means that the cost of a 75 meals per semester + 100 dining dollars may be included in some GA packages. If a GA chooses a higher cost meal plan, they pay the difference.
5. Textbook waiver means that **up to** \$50 per credit hour enrolled is available for book rentals or purchases (whichever is less expensive) is included in some GA packages. If a GA's book costs exceed that amount, they pay the difference.

The Responsibilities

With great privilege comes great responsibility! You are responsible for these, but *this is not an exhaustive list*. Check with your supervisor or the Saremi Center for more detail.

Wait until you have received an email from payroll or from the Saremi Center before you begin working. You may not start working before you are cleared.

Work the number of hours expected by your supervisor – that is typically 15-20/week during times when class is in session and up to 35/week during breaks. Your supervisor will never expect you to miss class for work. Your role as a student comes first, but it is expected that you will work with your supervisor to create a work schedule that meets the hour requirements.

If you are paid hourly, clock in when you start work and clock out when you leave. Do not enter blocks of time after the fact. Record time accurately by clocking in and out.

If you are paid hourly, you must submit your time sheet by midnight on the last day of the pay period every other week. If you did not work during the pay period, it is your responsibility to dismiss the time sheet.

Note: GAs who are not paid hourly do not clock in and out and are paid once a month at the end of the month.

Read and re-read your job description. Know what it says and meet or exceed those expectations.

Communicate. Communication goes two ways. Talk to your supervisor. Listen to your supervisor. *Read and answer* your email, texts etc. If you need help or information, ask.

Understand your GA compensation taxability. Under Internal Revenue Service regulation (IRC 127 see Publication 5137), cash and non-cash benefits awarded to graduate assistants are to be considered taxable income once the total amount exceeds \$5,250. Details on your specific taxability situation are available from the AIC Payroll office, and a tax professional can help you understand the monetary implications.

Q&A

Is my GA appointment for the whole time I'm in grad school at AIC?

Grad Assistant appointments cannot exceed 12 months in duration, but a graduate assistantship may be renewed for multiple years, conditional upon satisfactory performance, adequate degree progress, and the availability of funding. A GA position is at-will employment and can be terminated if necessary.

Can I get a refund on GA benefits I don't use?

No. Your GA benefits are provided to you by AIC. Any unused portion is not refundable. For example, if you choose a less expensive meal plan or do not use all of your text book allocation, there can be no refund. If the cost per credit hour for your program is less than the maximum benefit (equivalent to the MBA credit hour rate), the difference cannot be refunded.

Problem Solving Flow Chart

Why do I have a bill?

There are several reasons this can happen. Here are the most common ones:

- You must pay a registration fee every semester. This is not covered by any GA benefit.
- If you chose a meal plan or residence etc. that costs more than the allowed benefit, you will be charged for the difference.
- If the price per credit hour for your program is more than the GA benefit rate (which is equal to the MBA credit hour rate), you will be charged for the difference.
- If it is before the last day for add/drop, it may be that not all of your GA benefits have been credited to your bill yet.

If these do not answer your question, please feel free to reach out to the Student Accounts office for more information.

What happens if I withdraw?

We hope that you will maintain continuous enrollment in your academic program during your appointment period. If you decide to leave your position for any reason, including withdrawal or leave of absence from the college before the end of the appointment period, GAs will be responsible for charges that accrue after separation from the position including all tuition remission, waivers and grants or other compensation. Charges will be calculated based on the college's Student Accounts policy for Withdrawal from the College Refund Policy. You can read the details about that in the Academic Course Catalog. Text book benefits would have to be paid back to the college.

Please note that resignation from your GA position *does not* automatically withdraw you from classes. You must official withdraw with the Registrar's office.