

Number: PPD - 0605
Subject: Leave Policies for Full-Time Graduate Students

Annual and Holiday Leave for Students on Assistantships

In recognition of their contributions to the Batten School & Virginia Institute of Marine Science's (VIMS) research, education and advisory missions, students holding graduate assistantships of 20 hours per week annually are allowed up to 12 days of vacation annually. This specific amount of vacation leave is based on graduate student vacation policies at other institutions that have a formal vacation policy as of 2025. Annual leave is pro-rated for those who hold appointments for less than 20 hours per week during the academic year (e.g., MA students). Annual leave does not accrue into the next year. Graduate assistants will also receive scheduled [university holidays](#) including Recognition Leave days, as published by W&M if the holiday coincides with the period of the assistantship appointment. However, teaching assistants are expected to fulfill any assigned responsibilities when classes are in session on a scheduled W&M holiday or recognition day. In addition, if an assistantship supervisor¹ requires the student to perform assistantship duties (e.g., animal care, critical ongoing research projects) on a W&M [holiday](#) or weekend, that expectation must be communicated to the student as soon as possible (e.g., a month or more in advance) and provisions agreeable to the student must be made for compensatory and equivalent time off on a non-holiday weekday. Similarly, if a graduate student wishes to engage in assistantship activities on a W&M holiday, with permission from the student's supervisor, an alternate leave day should be determined. Days on which classes are not in session, but the university is open (e.g., Fall and Spring break, January intersession), are not automatic holidays for graduate students holding assistantships.

Time away requires planning to ensure continuity of research, teaching and other responsibilities of an assistantship appointment. Batten School & VIMS recognize the importance of time off for health and wellbeing. Supervisors should plan for and encourage graduate assistants to take annual leave and holiday time, accommodate student preferences whenever possible, and adjust work expectations to allow for time off. A graduate student seeking to take leave time away from assistantship duties should make the request to the supervisor with as much advanced notice as possible (e.g., a month or more in advance) to allow the supervisor to plan for adequate coverage of responsibilities. While hours worked for assistantships are not reported to VIMS or W&M, the supervisor is expected to monitor leave. The supervisor is responsible for maintaining a record of annual leave used by the student. A student may take additional time as long as they have arranged with the supervisor to make up the work hours missed.

¹ This is usually the advisor for Research Assistants (MA, MS or PhD), or the instructor for Teaching Assistants. Good planning will minimize confusion.

Although there is no formal personal and sick leave policy for graduate students on assistantships, supervisors are expected to provide a reasonable amount of sick leave and should work to accommodate student requests for other types of personal leave (e.g., religious holidays). It is the student's responsibility to inform the advisor or supervisor of the need for sick or personal leave. Sick leave or personal leave of more than 10 business days must be discussed with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the advisor.

Other Types of Leave

Students who are currently on assistantships and who plan to spend more than a month off campus (e.g., for research), students who wish to transition to part-time ("off-site") student status for employment or other reasons, or any student who wishes to take an extended leave of absence from the academic program for medical or other reasons, must have the permission of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Various types of leave affect eligibility status for assistantships and other types of financial support. The student should contact the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for further details.

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