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TO: DUSP MCP Research Assistants
FROM: Chris Zegras
SUBJECT: Terms and Responsibilities of RA appointments
DATE: September 2022

Congratulations on receiving an appointment as a Research Assistant (RA) in DUSP!

We as DUSP faculty find it highly rewarding to engage students in our research, and look forward to introducing you to new ideas and training you in new skills. We know the tuition and stipend support you are receiving are important to you. Therefore, in this memo, we are providing you with an overview of what is required and expected so that you can remain in good standing and maintain your financial support through your degree program.

Professionalism

Often students in DUSP see RA appointments as something extra that they do while in school, rather than regarding them as “real” jobs. However, from our perspective, an RA is a very serious appointment since it affects our ability to do our jobs and carries a significant financial investment given the combined costs of tuition and stipend. As an RA you are officially a student employee of the Institute. Therefore, we expect you will treat this appointment with the same level of professionalism that characterizes all of your other work endeavors. In return, we will do our best to contribute to your academic development and professional training.

Dates of Employment and Holidays

- You are responsible for working a designated number of hours each week. According to MIT policy, you are required to work these hours each week from 1 September through 31 May. Keep in mind that as an employee of the Institute you are required to work during periods when classes are not in session, including IAP and spring break. Also note that since you hold a nine-month, part-time appointment, you do not accrue vacation time.
- MIT observes several regular holidays, which are on the Institute’s calendar. During weeks in which there is an official holiday, you may pro-rate your hours (e.g. MIT is officially closed on Thursday and Friday for Thanksgiving holiday – if your RA work is for 10 hours/week (avg. 2 hrs/day), you would only need to work 6 hours that week).
- Taking vacation is at the discretion of your faculty research supervisor; with their approval you may take vacation provided that you make arrangements to make up the time that is missed.

Work Assignments

Your program group will give you a specific work assignment. While we have done our best to find a good match for you with faculty research, your assignment may not be directly related to your professional interests.

Documenting Hours

As an RA, your salary is paid twice per month (on the 15th and on the last working day of each month), beginning 9/30 through 5/31. Students and their faculty supervisors are required to track completed work – both time and tasks. Students are required to submit a 1-3 page summary of their work per academic term to headquarters that is signed by their faculty supervisor. For the fall term, this is due on January 13, 2023 and for the spring term, this is due on May 30, 2023.

Variations in Weekly Work Hours

We understand that your academic workload varies from week to week, as can the RA work you are expected to complete. It is our responsibility to let you know in advance if there will be an extra demand on your time. Similarly, if you anticipate needing extra study or personal time in a given week, it is up to you to propose a workable plan of action and to present this to us as far in advance as possible. Because of the part-time nature of the RA assignments, there is generally ample

flexibility during any given week for scheduling your effort. (Note: full-time RAs have a work commitment of 20 hours/week, half-time RAs 10 hours/week, and all other levels of effort are prorated accordingly.)

Incomplete Hours

You should always do your best to stay up to date on your hours. However, we understand that unforeseen situations arise. Therefore, keep the following in mind:

- The benchmark we use is that you should **never backlog more than 8 hours per month**. We find that beyond this, it becomes difficult to make up the time and creates stress for everyone.
- Any hours you backlog in the fall semester must be completed before 1 February. Any hours you backlog in the spring semester must be completed by 15 June (or prior to Commencement for graduating students). If you find you are falling behind in your work for any reason, you should **meet with your faculty supervisor as soon as possible** to discuss how the situation can be addressed. We are interested in your academic, professional and personal well-being, and are committed to your success! The earlier we are informed of any issues, the better equipped we will be to help you work them out. Note that if, when, and how hours can be made up is at the discretion of your faculty supervisor.
- In rare cases of a chronic inability to complete work assignments, or of chronic poor performance, your RAship may be terminated and rescinded for future semesters.

Switching Supervisors

Funding for RAs is assigned to program groups and to faculty members within the group. We cannot guarantee that a request to change the faculty member to whom you are assigned can be accommodated. First and foremost, you should discuss this issue with your faculty supervisor. This faculty member will then discuss the matter with others in the group and a collective decision will be reached on how to proceed. Occasionally students change their program group affiliation during their degree program; should you do so, the question of your work assignment will be handled on a case-by-case basis. However, it is likely that you will be required to continue to fulfill your work obligation to your original program group.

Please sign below acknowledging these terms and conditions, and return the signed copy to Sandra Elliot in 9-413 on or before Registration Day (Tuesday, September 6).

On behalf of the entire faculty, I welcome you into your position, and wish you an exciting, thought-provoking and highly productive year as a Research Assistant!

Ziqing Xu

Print Name

Ziqing Xu

Signature