WCU
WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY POLICY

Graduate Assistantship Policy for the Graduate School

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Purpose and Scope

As a high impact practice, Graduate Assistantships in the Graduate School in the Division of Academic Affairs are a highly valued education experience intended to also promote student access to graduate school.

In rare circumstances, termination of a graduate assistant during their term of employment may be warranted. Similarly, there may be a situation when a request for reassignment of a graduate assistant supervisor by the graduate assistant may be warranted.

This policy provides guidance for both supervisors and graduate assistants in such situations. It is also is important to note that graduate students holding graduate assistant appointments must also remain in good academic standing as well as abide by the University's Student Code of Conduct policy and the Academic Integrity Policy.

Policy Statement

To maintain equity and consistency of the graduate assistantship experience, Graduate Assistants can only be terminated through The Graduate School. Similarly, to ensure equity and consistency of the graduate assistantship experience, reassignment of graduate assistantship supervision can only occur through The Graduate School.

The Policy Framework and outlined Procedures is adopted to provide guidance.

Policy Framework

I. Termination of Graduate Assistantships initiated by a supervisor

The Graduate School acknowledges that in rare circumstances termination of a graduate assistantship may be warranted. What follows is the procedure to be

followed by supervisors and Graduate Assistants when difficulties in the graduate assistantship experience rise to the level that termination of the assistantship is being considered.

The following are examples of when terminating a Graduate Assistant may be appropriate to consider (not an exclusive list):

1. The Graduate Assistant does not complete assigned work and/or stops reporting for work shifts.
2. The Graduate Assistant does not work all assigned hours or attempt to make them up.
3. The Graduate Assistant regularly does not complete work in a satisfactory manner.
4. The Graduate Assistant is unresponsive to multiple contacts from the supervisor.

When considering termination of a Graduate Assistantship, the Graduate Assistant and the supervisor must comply with each of the following steps in the Graduate Assistant termination policy:

Step 1: Develop an Improvement Plan

Supervisors must first attempt to remediate the situation by communicating directly with the Graduate Assistant and outlining clear expectations and a timeline for improvement. The Graduate Assistant must receive this feedback in writing (it is also recommended that the supervisor discuss the feedback with the student in person) and feedback must include a documented improvement plan to include: (1) clear description of the way(s) the Graduate Student is not meeting the requirements of the assistantship, (2) plan for support to assist the Graduate Student in meeting the requirements of the assistantship moving forward, and (3) measurable outcomes to evaluate the Graduate Assistant's progress toward meeting the requirements of the assistantship to be assessed in a discrete (and clearly articulated) time period (e.g., two-weeks).

An example of these necessary elements is: (1) The GA is not completing the work required of the assistantship with in 10 hours/week. Work is assigned yet is left unfinished across multiple weeks with no explanation of why the work is incomplete and how the GA is spending assistantship time. (2) To better support the Graduate Assistant, an agreed upon weekly schedule of work will be established and a detailed log of hours worked and work activities attempted and completed will be completed by the Graduate Assistant and submitted to the supervisor after each work day. A weekly meeting with the supervisor will be required to review work logs and to readjust expectations as needed. (3) The GA and the supervisor will meet after three weeks (on xxxx date) to discuss progress by the GA in meeting these work expectations. At this time, the Graduate Assistant logs should clearly indicate that the GA has completed the necessary hours of GA work each week at the agreed upon times and that no less than 90% of the work assigned has been completed each week unless an adjustment was made at a weekly meeting with the supervisor.

The improvement plan must be signed and dated by both the supervisor and the Graduate Assistant and a copy must be sent to the Graduate School for approval.

Step 2: Assess Improvement

A supervisor must meet with the Graduate Assistant to discuss the GA's progress toward meeting the assistantship requirements. Following this meeting, the supervisor must submit a written assessment of how the Graduate Assistant utilized the supports and met the outcomes delineated in the improvement plan (step 1 above). If the supervisor finds that sufficient improvement is being made, they may revise the improvement plan in collaboration with the Graduate Assistant to include additional supports and outcomes to be assessed at a second time point. The written assessment and revised improvement plan must be signed by the supervisor and the Graduate Assistant and submitted to the Graduate Dean for approval.

If, however, the supervisor finds that the agreed upon outcomes have not been met, **the supervisor will submit a written evaluation detailing the assessment of these outcomes (and the utilization of supports) to the Graduate Dean and requesting termination of the Graduate Assistantship.**

Step 3: Evaluation by the Graduate Dean

The Graduate Dean will make a determination regarding termination of the Graduate Assistantship within 5 business days of receipt of the signed termination request. The Graduate Dean will notify the student of the termination request and may request to meet with the supervisor and/or the Graduate Assistant in making this determination. The Graduate Dean may also request the assistance of representatives from the Graduate Council Executive Committee in coming to a determination.

Appeals Process

If the Graduate Dean determines that termination is the most appropriate resolution, **the student can appeal this decision by submitting an appeal statement in writing to the Graduate Dean within 5 business days of the termination decision issued by the Dean.** With a successful appeal by the student, the Graduate Dean will consider what type of support may be necessary to resolve differences/tension between the Graduate Assistant and the supervisor in order for the student to complete the Graduate Assistantship (e.g., mediation, reassignment to another supervisor, etc.).

Stipend/Tuition

Upon termination, the Graduate Assistant's stipend payments will be prorated as of their last day of work, and the full tuition waiver will be removed from their account leaving a balance that must be paid. Although every effort will be made

to replace the Graduate Assistant who has been terminated, The Graduate School does not guarantee that a replacement can be secured as it may be difficult to find a new Graduate Assistant mid-semester.

II. Request for Reassignment of a Graduate-Assistant supervisor (by the Graduate Student):

The Graduate School acknowledges that in rare circumstances reassignment of a Graduate Assistant supervisor may be warranted. What follows is the procedure to be followed by supervisors and Graduate Assistants when difficulties in the graduate assistantship experience rise to the level that reassignment of a Graduate Assistant supervisor is being considered. The following are examples of when requesting a different supervisor may be appropriate to consider (not an exclusive list):

1. The Graduate Assistant is not receiving regular supervision and communication from their supervisor.
2. The work assigned to the Graduate Assistant is outside the scope of what is permitted (e.g. in the amount of work regularly exceeds the work that can be accomplished within the hourly requirement of the GA; by requiring the Graduate Assistant to work outside the days academic calendar, such as over spring or winter breaks; by requiring the Graduate Assistant to complete work that is inappropriate for a GA, such as teaching responsibilities).

When considering reassignment of a Graduate Assistant supervisor, the Graduate Assistant and the supervisor must comply with each of the following steps Request for Reassignment of ag Graduate Assistant supervisor policy:

<u>Step 1: Notify the Graduate School of the problem</u>

Graduate Assistants should notify The Dean of The Graduate School (TGS) about their concern to determine how the expectations for the graduate assistantship do not comply with GA regulations and requirements. The Graduate Assistant is encouraged to discuss their concerns with their supervisor even if the expectations

of the graduate assistantship do comply with the GA regulations and requirements. TGS staff can assist in supporting the student by facilitating this conversation. Should TGS staff find that the expectations of the graduate assistantship do not comply with the GA regulations and requirements, TGS staff will assist the graduate student in moving through the additional steps discussed below.

Step 2: Develop an Improvement Plan

With the assistance of TGS staff, Graduate Assistant will attempt to remediate the situation by communicating directly with the supervisor and outlining their concerns (this can occur with TGS staff facilitating the conversation if requested by the Graduate Assistant). If TGS staff is not present at the meeting between the supervisor and Graduate Assistant, the GA will report back to TGS staff and the TGS staff will initiate a conversation separately with the supervisor. TGS staff will then generate a summary statement of the student concerns to share with the supervisor which will include a documented improvement plan with: (1) clear description of the way(s) the expectations of the graduate assistantship will change to comply with GA regulations and requirements, and (2) measurable outcomes to evaluate progress toward compliance with the regulations and requirements of the assistantship to be assessed in a discrete (and clearly articulated) time period (e.g., two-weeks).

An example of these necessary elements is: (1) The supervisor will assign work to the Graduate Assistant on a weekly basis that is estimated to be completed within the 10 hours of GA time required of the student. The Graduate Assistant will submit a log of work accomplished over the week to the supervisor at weekly supervisory appointments and work assignments will be adjusted as needed to assure that the expectations of the supervisor are reasonable given the GA time requirement. (2) The GA, the supervisor, and TGS staff will meet after xxx days/weeks (on xxxx date) to discuss progress by the supervisor in adjusting their work expectations for the GA. At this time, the Graduate Assistant logs should clearly indicate that the GA

has completed the necessary hours of GA work each week at the agreed upon times.

The improvement plan must be signed and dated by both the supervisor and the Graduate Assistant and a copy must be sent to the Graduate Dean for approval. Should the supervisor not want to sign the improvement plan, supervision of the graduate assistantship will be reassigned so the graduate student can complete the terms of the graduate assistantship under a different supervisor.

Step 3: Assess Improvement

A supervisor must meet with the Graduate Assistant and TGS staff to discuss the supervisor's compliance with GA regulations and requirements. Following this meeting, TGS staff will submit a written assessment of how the supervisor met the outcomes delineated in the improvement plan (step 2 above). If the Graduate Assistant and TGS staff finds that sufficient improvement is being made, they will continue with the assistantship under the supervision of their current supervisor. The written assessment and revised improvement plan must be signed by the supervisor and the Graduate Assistant and submitted to the Graduate Dean for approval.

If, however, the graduate student and TGS staff finds that the agreed upon outcomes have not been met, **the Graduate Assistant will submit a written, signed/dated evaluation detailing the assessment of these outcomes (and the utilization of supports) to the Graduate Dean requesting that supervision of the graduate assistantship be reassigned so the graduate student can complete the terms of the graduate assistantship under a different.**

Step 4: Evaluation by the Graduate Dean

The Graduate Dean will make a determination regarding termination of the Graduate Assistantship within 5 business days of receipt of the signed termination request. The Graduate Dean may request to meet with the supervisor and/or the

Graduate Assistant in making this determination. The Graduate Dean may also request the assistance of representatives from the Graduate Council Executive Committee in coming to a determination. If the Graduate Dean determines that termination is the most appropriate resolution, **supervision of the graduate assistantship will be reassigned so the graduate student can complete the terms of the graduate assistantship under a different supervisor.**

Definitions and References

Good academic standing

Student Code of Conduct policy

Academic Integrity Policy.

Reviewed by: The Graduate School staff, The Graduate Council, Office of Human Resources and Labor Relations, the Office of Student Conduct, and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

Office of Labor Relations: William J. Helzlsouer, Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer

Policy Owner: Lisa Calvano, Ph.D.; Dean of the Graduate School

Approved by:



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