HLGU

Hannibal-LaGrange University

Graduate Assistant Program Handbook

For Graduate Assistants and Their Supervisors

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Hannibal-LaGrange University Statement of Compliance

Hannibal-LaGrange University complies with all federal and state nondiscrimination laws and does not engage in prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability, national or ethnic origin or ancestry, military or veteran's status, or genetic information in either employment or the provision of services. As an institution controlled by the Missouri Baptist Convention, the University is exempted from some provisions of nondiscrimination laws, including the prohibition against religious discrimination in employment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and, to the extent compliance would conflict with the University's religious tenets, the prohibition against sex discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. HLGU is a non-for-profit exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Hannibal-LaGrange University Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Motto

Mission

Hannibal-LaGrange University transforms lives and communities through relevant education anchored in a Biblical worldview.

Vision

The vision of Hannibal-LaGrange University is to impact eternity for Christ through higher education.

Core Values

- Biblical Worldview
- Educational Relevance
- Community Mindset
- Transformational Leadership
- Generational Impact

Motto

Knowledge For Service

Graduate Assistant Program Oversight, Purpose, and Objectives

Oversight

Oversight of the Graduate Assistantship program is housed in the Business Office, specifically the Office of Human Resources, and direct supervision is provided by the faculty or staff member

appointed by the respective Vice President or designee. The Office of Human Resources is responsible for maintaining a current list of graduate assistants and their placements.

Purpose

The purpose of the Graduate Assistant Program is to provide qualified students with financial resources for completing a master's degree while gaining valuable work experience in preparation for their chosen career. In addition, graduate assistants benefit the institution by providing diverse insights from both a student and staff perspective.

Graduate Program Objectives

- Recruit outstanding and promising students to graduate study.
- Provide graduate-level learning experiences through a supervised assignment.
- Provide appropriate support for graduate assistants to graduate on time.
- Complete targeted departmental tasks through the work of a graduate assistant.

Request to Add New/Maintain Current Graduate Assistant Appointment/Position

Requests for approval to create a new graduate assistant position or hire a graduate assistant into a vacated spot must go through the department/division head to the appropriate Vice President to be taken to cabinet for consideration and approval. The cabinet member will provide approval or denial in the form of an email to both the department/division and the Office of Human Resources.

Determining Graduate Assistant Program Eligibility

Personal Eligibility

Graduate Assistants are employed under the University student employment guidelines and subject to the policies of the Employee Handbook and Student Handbook.

HLGU expects an employee to:

- Be a born-again believer.
- Believe the Bible to be God's inspired infallible Word.
- Be faithful to a local evangelical church (in attendance and otherwise) of the employee's choice.
- Strive to earnestly set a clean upright Christian example in daily life.
- Agree to abide by HLGU's adopted faith statement, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* from the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Follow a standard of conduct in keeping with the moral and religious standards of HLGU.

- Maintain total abstinence from the use of tobacco, alcohol, other harmful drugs, and behavior which may lead to a violation of God's standards for sexual activities.
- Remain loyal to HLGU during employment.

Academic Eligibility

According to the HLGU Academic Catalog, students who are applying to be Graduate Assistants must meet appropriate academic requirements to be considered for/allowed to continue in a Graduate Assistant Position:

- Must possess an earned bachelor's degree (or its equivalent) by the beginning of assignment date.
- Must have a cumulative GPA of 2.75 or higher in all bachelor's degree courses or in their last 60 hours of coursework (whichever is higher) to enter the program.
- Must have been admitted, but not conditionally, into a master's program.
- Exception: With the written approval from the appropriate Vice President and the Vice President of Academic Administration, students may be allowed to fill an open graduate assistant position and receive applicable compensation while completing leveling work to meet the GPA requirement. However, the student is responsible for paying tuition for leveling courses.
- Any additional exceptions to this policy must be made, in writing, by the appropriate director and the Vice President of Academic Administration.

Undergraduate Eligibility

Undergraduate students may be eligible to fill a graduate assistant position if the following stipulations are met:

- No eligible graduate candidates exist.
- No more than one semester remaining in their undergraduate program.
- Have at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA, including courses from other institutions.

Additional Notes:

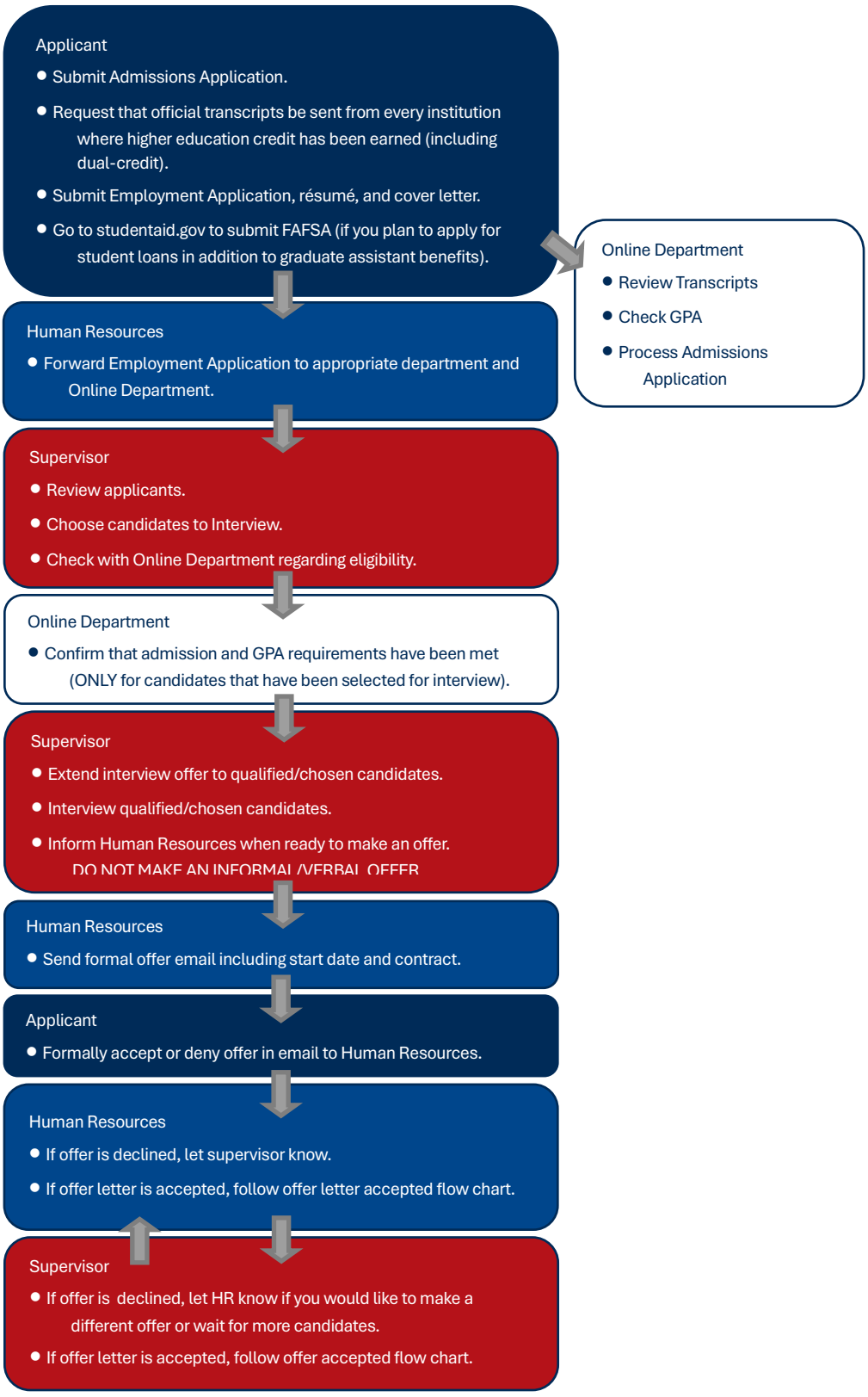
- Undergraduates filling a graduate assistant position will receive the graduate stipend but not the graduate tuition concession.
- Undergraduates filling a graduate assistant position may count their time as an undergraduate in a GA position toward the overall assistantship time requirements.

Additional Eligibility Requirements

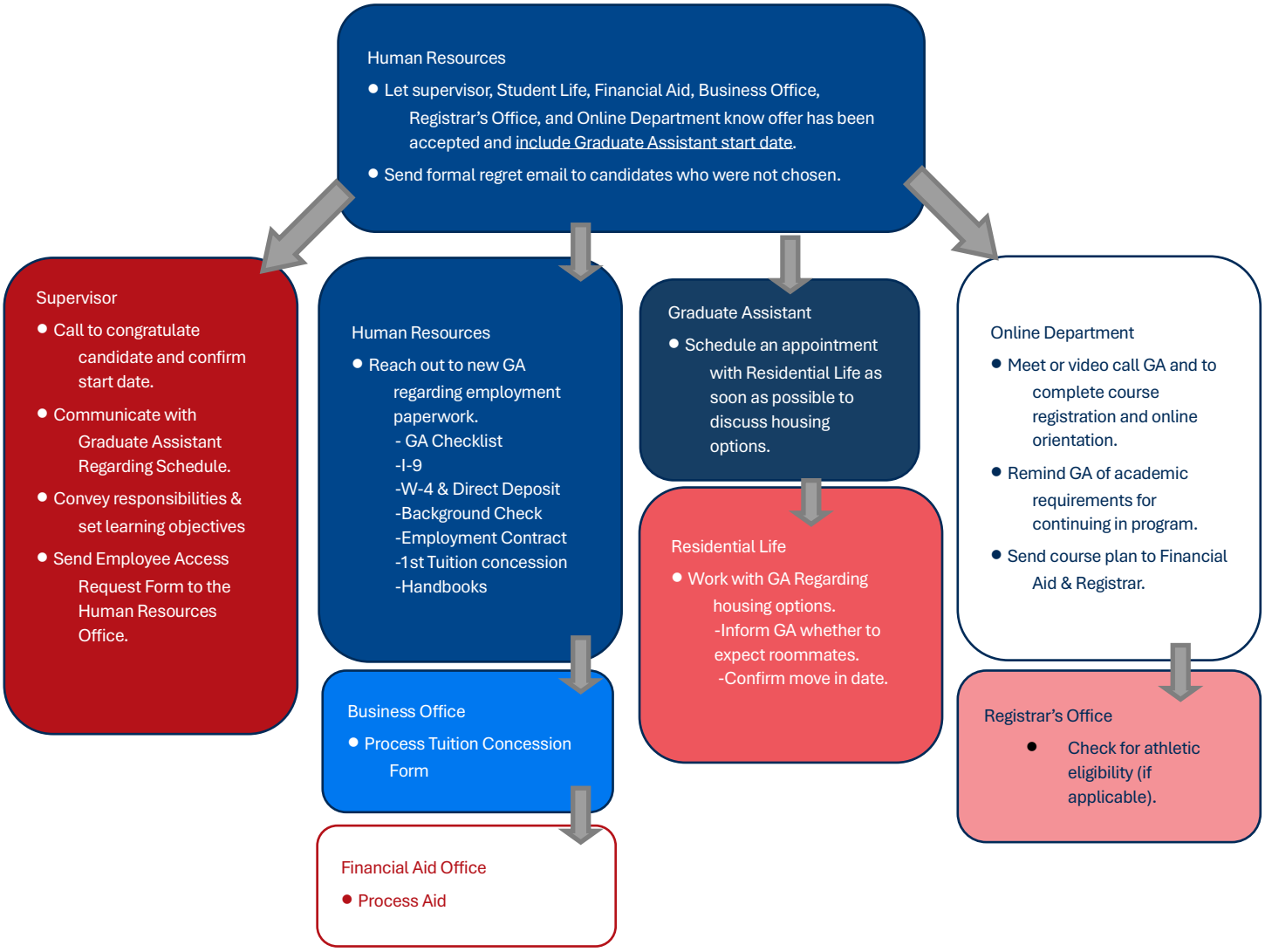
Additional job skills, experience, and requirements may be defined in individual job descriptions for posted graduate assistant positions on www.hlg.edu.

Graduate Assistant Program Application and Hiring Processes

Initial Applicant Flow Chart



New GA Hiring Process Flow Chart



Graduate Assistant Program Wages, Taxes, and Benefits

Graduate Assistants are designated by HLGU as student employees and paid on a bi-monthly basis.

Tuition

- Graduate Assistants are eligible for tuition concessions covering up to 18 credit hours per academic year (fall, spring, and summer combined). This limit supports degree progress while managing institutional resources.
    - Graduate Assistants must fill out a Graduate Assistant Tuition Concession Form prior to the beginning of each semester to receive this benefit.
- Exceptions may be granted in the following cases:
    - Athletic Eligibility: Student-athletes may exceed the 18-hour limit if additional coursework is required to maintain eligibility. Such coursework must be from non-degree seeking courses, with prior approval from the online department.
    - Program Requirements: Degree programs requiring more than 18 hours annually, to be completed with the designated appointment length, (see page 11), may have additional hours covered with proper documentation and prior approval from the online department.
    - This includes the following programs:
        - Master of Science in Education with a Track in Teaching and Learning with Initial Teacher Certification/Special Education Grades K-12.
        - Master of Arts in Counseling (MACO)
- Tuition Concession waivers that total more than $5,250 per tax year (Jan. 1-Dec. 31) are taxable.
- Cost of textbooks and fees (including graduation and Credit for Prior Learning transcription fees) are not included in tuition concession waiver.

Taking Additional Courses

Graduate assistants may take additional coursework during their Graduate Assistant program at their own expense.

Stipend

- Graduate Assistants will be paid a $500 per month stipend.
- Hannibal-LaGrange University does not withhold FICA/Medicare taxes from Graduate Assistant stipends.
- Graduate Assistants are still responsible for paying FICA/Medicare tax as applicable.

Housing

- **Graduate Assistants living in residence halls are subject to the same community standards, policies, and procedures as undergraduate residents.**
- If available, on-campus housing may be provided for non-married graduate assistants.
- Roommates may be assigned.
- Married graduate assistants may apply to live in on-campus married housing if available and will be required to pay rent at a reduced rate.
- As a graduate assistant, the rent for married housing will be reduced by $300 per month.
- Graduate Assistant should schedule an appointment with the Residential Life Office in the Student Center to discuss housing availability and housing deposits.
- On-campus housing is a taxable benefit.
- Should a graduate assistant choose not to utilize the on-campus housing provided, the University shall not provide other compensation for housing.

Meals

- Some graduate assistants working for Student Life may have their meals provided in the Partee Center depending on the needs of the position.
- Graduate assistants working in other departments must pay for their own meals.

Federal Financial Aid

- Graduate assistants may be eligible for Federal Student Loans.
    - Must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if interested in applying for loans.
    - Must take at least 4.5 hours in a semester to be considered a half-time graduate student.
    - Student loans already held by Graduate Assistants may go into repayment status if the Graduate Assistant drops below 4.5 enrolled hours in a semester.
    - Students are not eligible for Financial Aid for courses taken outside their degree program.

Continued Participation in University Athletics

- Graduate assistants who have additional semesters of eligibility may be allowed to participate in Hannibal-LaGrange University athletic teams.
    - Must take a full-time academic load (9 hours for graduate students) of course work during athletic semester.
    - Must not be on academic probation.

Vacation, Breaks, and Illness

Graduate Assistants are covered by Worker's Compensation during paid work hours but are not eligible for other University benefits (vacation, sick leave, medical, dental, retirement or life insurance). Graduate Assistants:

- Graduate Assistants are responsible to their supervisors and the institution during the fall, spring, and summer semesters.
- The exact schedule will be specific to the student's position and the supervisor's expectations.
- Graduate assistants should assume the need to be on campus year-round unless stipulated explicitly by their supervisor with documentation.
- Do not earn vacation or sick days.
- May work remotely or take days off at the discretion of supervisor during fall, spring, winter, summer, and breaks when offices are still open.
- Should work on average **20 hours a week**
- **Must work at least 900 hours in an academic year.**
- Must make up for hours missed for illness or approved days off at a time approved by the supervisor.

Graduate Assistant Appointment

Initial Appointments

Initial graduate appointments should be made for the beginning of an academic semester and should follow the procedures outlined in the Application flow chart.

Appointment Length

- **Two years for 30 - 36 hour degrees.**
- **Two and a half years for 42–48-hour degrees.**
- **Three years for 54 – 63 hour degrees.**
- Graduate assistants must commit to two or three years of employment as a graduate assistant (depending on degree program).
- While graduate assistants are expected to agree to be in their positions for 2-3 years (depending on program length), Hannibal-LaGrange University makes no guarantee that graduate assistants will be retained for that length of time (see Reappointment).
- Student teaching semesters are not covered unless specific permission is received from the Vice President for Academic Administration and the Education Department.
- Exceptions to Graduate Assistantship length must be approved through the Vice President for Academic Administration.

Stipulations

- **Graduate Assistant duties should average 20 hours per week and at least 900 hours per academic year and must be tracked on the Graduate Assistant Timesheet.**
- **Timesheets must be approved/signed by GA's supervisor and submitted to HR by the close of business on the first Friday of every month for the prior month.**
- Graduate Assistants must complete FERPA training and abide by FERPA laws.
- If Graduate Assistants wish to obtain an additional job on campus, they must seek approval from Human Resources.

Reappointment

Reappointments to assistantship positions each academic year are not automatic.

- Decisions regarding whether or not a graduate assistant will be reappointed will be based upon their annual employee evaluation (to be completed at the end of the graduate assistant's second semester).
- Graduate students who are not re-appointed will be notified by the Human Resources Office.

Maintaining Graduate Assistant Program Eligibility

Satisfactory Work Performance Eligibility

Graduate assistants are expected to:

- Meet responsibilities specified in their job descriptions.
- Adhere to the agreed upon work schedule.
- Attend weekly chapel (if within scheduled work hours).
- Attend monthly All-Employee Meeting (if within scheduled work hours).
- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the employment expectations outlined in the HLGU Employee Handbook and Graduate Assistant Contract.

For concerns with performance, the assistantship supervisor will attempt to correct performance deficiencies through the progressive disciplinary process outlined in the Employee Handbook. A recommendation to terminate an assistantship may occur if the assistant fails to make specified improvements in performance within an established time period, or there are violations of HLGU's conduct standards.

Course Load

- Generally, take **6 credit hours per semester (18 hours per year), with a maximum of 21 hours depending on GA's specific degree program.** (See tuition section above for full

guidelines. If any issues arise with degree program hours contact supervisor and Office of Human Resources regarding resolution).

- Must take at least one course in a semester to remain employed as a graduate assistant.
- Courses may be rearranged for athletic eligibility as long as the graduate assistant stays enrolled in at least one course per semester.

Academic Eligibility

Successful, timely completion of a graduate degree is the primary goal of the Assistantship Program. The responsibility for monitoring academic progress rests with the designated supervisor and academic advisor.

According to the HLGU Academic Catalog, to continue in a Graduate Assistant Position:

- Must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher while in graduate program.
- They are allowed one semester of Graduate Assistant Probation if HLGU graduate GPA falls below 3.0.
    - Required to enroll in Student Success Lab.
    - Required to submit a letter to academic advisor and graduate assistant supervisor outlining plan for future academic success.
    - Required to report academic progress to advisor on a bi-weekly basis until 3.0 GPA has been restored.
    - Required to pay for any repeat courses rather than utilizing tuition concession.
    - Will not be permitted to continue in Graduate Assistant Program if probationary requirements are not met, but may be allowed to continue in Graduate Program under Graduate Program academic guidelines.
- The 3.0 GPA requirement includes undergraduate courses taken in a graduate semester.
- Graduate students must earn a grade of B- or higher in all except one course. Students are allowed to receive one C (+/-) in their program of study. If a student receives more than one C, a D, or an F in the program of study, the student must repeat the course to receive a B- or higher grade.

Reassignment, Resignation, Withdrawal, and Termination from Graduate Assistant Program

If a resignation/withdraw is deemed necessary, you are asked to resign/withdraw effective at the end of a semester unless extenuating circumstances prevent this. Prior to deciding, graduate assistants are encouraged to speak with a supervisor and/or Human Resources staff. Notice of resignation/withdraw is requested a minimum of 30 days prior to the end of the semester.

Reassignment

On occasion, it may be determined by the graduate assistant or supervisor that the Graduate Assistant/department will benefit from a different assignment.

- A graduate assistant who wishes to request a reassignment to a different GA position must contact their direct Supervisor and the Human Resources department.
- Supervisors who believe their graduate assistant or department may benefit from a new GA assignment should work with Human Resources to come up with an appropriate solution.

Resignation

Assistants may choose to resign from employment while continuing enrollment in a graduate program. Should resignation from the assistantship assignment occur before the end of a semester:

- All future stipend payments will be forfeited.
- The tuition waiver for the semester will be prorated based upon weeks left in the semester.
- The balance of the semester's tuition will be applied to the graduate assistant's student account.
- Resigning GAs must contact the Director of Campus life regarding housing arrangements end date.

Graduate Assistants who wish to resign should speak with their direct supervisor and send a resignation letter to their supervisor and the Human Resources Office.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal from the academic graduate program will result in an automatic termination of the Graduate Assistantship assignment. If withdrawal occurs before the end of the semester:

- Tuition and fee charges will be calculated in accordance with current policy and may be applied to the Graduate Assistant's student account.
- The effective date of withdrawal will be the last date communicated by the graduate program to the University Registrar.
- Graduate Assistants who wish to withdraw from their academic program must complete a University Withdrawal Form and submit it to the Registrar's Office.

Simultaneous Resignation/Withdrawal

Both of the above procedures are effective.

Termination

If a Graduate Assistant's work performance is not satisfactory and the GA fails to make improvements specified in the notice of deficiency by the time their performance is re-evaluated,

the GA's supervisor may recommend to the VP/Director that the assistantship be terminated or not renewed for the next year.

Behaviors that may result in the termination of the GA's assistantship without oral warning or notice of deficiency in performance include, but are not limited to:

- Failing to maintain academic eligibility because of unsatisfactory academic progress (See HLGU Academic Catalog).
- Engaging in unethical or unacceptable conduct (see Employee Handbook).

Depending upon the reason for termination, you may be given 30 calendar days' notice. Behaviors defined as Gross Misconduct in the HLGU Employee Handbook may result in immediate termination. Termination of an assistantship will follow the same procedures as "Resignation" and "Withdrawal" from graduate Program.

Graduate Assistant Supervisor and Academic Advisor Responsibilities

Graduate Assistant Supervisor Responsibilities

- Follow flowcharts for Graduate Assistant Applicants and Processing.
- Meet with graduate assistant at the beginning of each semester to review job responsibilities.
- Conduct a 90-day employee evaluation.
- Conduct an annual employee evaluation (to be completed at the end of the GA's second semester).
- Correct any performance deficiencies through the progressive disciplinary process outlined in the Employee Handbook.
- Be assigned as Graduate Assistant's University Advisor in Self-Service and Colleague.
- Reach out to the graduate assistant if any academic concerns are brought to light.
- Give résumé feedback for reapplicants, showing specific consideration to how skills learned during the Assistantship may be best included.
- Inform the Office of Human Resources or Online Department if any concerns arise.
- Attend graduate assistant supervisor meeting each semester.
- Approve and submit **Graduate Assistant Timesheet** each month.

Graduate Assistant Academic Advisor Responsibilities

An appropriate advisor from the Online Office shall be assigned as academic advisor to each Graduate Assistant based upon major. The advisor will:

- Let perspective supervisors know if graduate assistants meet academic requirements for hiring according to the HLGU Academic Catalog.

- Meet with new graduate assistants in person or via video to conduct online student orientation.
- Check graduate assistant academic progress and grades regularly.
    - Reach out to graduate assistant if there is an academic concern.
    - Reach out to supervisor if there is an academic concern.
    - If necessary, involve the Office of Human Resources in discussion regarding academic expectations.
- Work with graduate assistant regarding academic course plan and schedule for each semester.

Graduate Assistant Helpful Links and Resources

Academic Catalog

Employee Handbook

Federal Financial Aid

Human Resources Office

Online Office

Registrar's Office

Student Handbook

Updating the Graduate Assistant Handbook

The Office of Human Resources staff will work with appropriate departments to review and recommend any appropriate updates to the handbook to the executive cabinet.

- Check that all policies and procedures are still current.
- Check that all links still work and are applicable.
- Make any appropriate additions, deletions, or corrections.
- Update and redistribute handbook at August Employee workshop or as changes are made.

Contacts

Academic Office

573.629.3092

Academics@hlg.edu

Online Office

573.629.3103

Online@hlg.edu

Office of Human Resources

573.628.3058

Humanresources@hlg.edu

Student Life Office

573.629.3026

StudentLife@hlg.edu

Graduate Assistant Handbook Signature Page

(Submit to Human Resources)

I, _____, do certify that I have read and understood the policies pertaining to Graduate Assistantships as outlined in the HLGU Graduate Assistant Handbook. In addition, I affirm that I agree to abide by the policies contained therein and understand that failure to do so may lead to loss of my Graduate Assistantship appointment and a requirement for me to pay any applicable student account balance.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Assigned Department/Division and/or Team: _____

Graduate Assistant Checklist

This checklist should be submitted to Human Resources by the end of the first week of classes in the Graduate Assistant's first semester.

Name: _____ Supervisor:_____

Assigned Department/Division and/or Team: _____

- ☐ Apply for Admission to Applicable Graduate Program
- ☐ Request that all official transcripts be sent to Hannibal-LaGrange University
- ☐ Complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (if desired)
- ☐ Receive Admission Notification
- ☐ Apply for Graduate Assistantship
- ☐ Interview for Graduate Assistantship
- ☐ Accept Graduate Assistantship Offer
- ☐ Complete Human Resources paperwork
- ☐ Complete FERPA Training
- ☐ Read Employee Handbook
- ☐ Read Student Handbook
- ☐ Complete Tuition Concession Form (in the Business Office).
- ☐ Meet with Online Advisor to Register for Classes
- ☐ Complete Online Student Orientation
- ☐ Meet with Supervisor to Review Expectations and set Hours
- ☐ Set up 90-day employee evaluation with supervisor
- ☐ Set up annual employee evaluation (to be completed at the end of second semester)