

Graduate Assistant Performance Improvement and Administrative Action Policy

FAILURE TO SATISFY PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance Improvement Meetings - In addition to regularly scheduled performance reviews, when a supervisor determines that a graduate assistant is failing to meet satisfactory performance standards, the supervisor will meet with the assistant. Together, they will review the duties and responsibilities expected of the graduate assistant, and the supervisor will identify those areas in which the performance of those duties and responsibilities is judged to be unsatisfactory. The supervisor will then advise the graduate assistant that if his or her performance does not improve to a satisfactory level within a time period specified by the supervisor, the assistantship will be terminated. The time period established by the supervisor should provide a sufficient and reasonable time for the graduate assistant to demonstrate a satisfactory level of performance. In some instances, the graduate assistant's failure to meet satisfactory standards of performance may be disruptive of the educational process (e.g., failure to appear for a teaching assignment, or failure to grade examinations in a timely fashion). In such instances, the graduate student should be advised that any subsequent failure to meet satisfactory performance standards may result in termination of the assistantship. As soon as possible following this meeting (generally within three working days) the supervisor will provide the assistant with a written summary of the meeting, including notice of areas of unsatisfactory performance and the time period specified for improvement to a satisfactory level. A copy will be sent to the department chair for review/approval and to the dean of the Graduate School.

Termination of an Assistantship -- If a graduate assistant fails to meet acceptable standards of performance as prescribed in the performance improvement meeting, the supervisor will notify the department chair. The department chair will schedule a meeting with the supervisor and graduate assistant as soon as possible, generally within three working days. At that meeting, the graduate assistant's performance will again be reviewed. If it is concluded that the graduate assistant has failed to meet acceptable performance standards, the department chair may terminate the graduate assistantship appointment. The department chair will provide a written notice summarizing the meeting and the action taken to the supervisor, graduate assistant, the dean of the college, and the dean of the Graduate School within five working days of the meeting.

ACTS OF MISCONDUCT AND UNPROFESSIONALISM - Acts of misconduct or unprofessionalism may require prompt action. Such acts may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Refusing to obey reasonable and necessary instructions or job assignments, insubordination, or using abusive or unprofessional language in the workplace.
- b. Indulging in offensive or obscene manner in the workplace.
- c. Drinking intoxicants on University property, with exception of events acting in accordance with the University Campus Alcohol Policy.
- d. Using illegal drugs on University property.
- e. Stealing or misappropriating University-property or property belonging to students or university employees.

f. Scientific misconduct.

Appropriate actions include termination of an assistantship, suspension of an assistantship for a specified period, and reduction of the FTE and/or benefits associated with that assistantship. If a supervisor believes a graduate assistant has engaged in such an act of misconduct or unprofessionalism, the following steps are to be taken.

For incident(s) of unprofessional acts or behavior which violate accepted norms of professional conduct, the supervisor will provide notice of the proposed administrative action to the graduate assistant and document the situation in a written report. In such cases, the graduate assistant may be placed on immediate administrative leave with pay from the assistantship duties, at the discretion of the supervisor. The report will be provided to the department chair to whom the supervisor reports, who will schedule a meeting with the supervisor and graduate assistant as soon as possible, generally within three working days. At that meeting, the incident(s) will be reviewed and the proposed administrative action may be affirmed, amended, or overturned by the department chair. The department chair will provide a written notice summarizing the meeting and his/her decision regarding administrative action to the supervisor, graduate assistant, the dean of the college, and the dean of the Graduate School within five working days of the meeting.

Additionally, for misconduct covered by the Student Code of Conduct or the Sexual Misconduct Policy, the case will also be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Acts of misconduct may include, but are not limited to, theft, fraud, physical altercation, and sexual harassment, as defined in the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Supervisors and students should be aware that termination or reduction of the FTE of an assistantship, will have large financial impacts, which can be particularly problematic for a student if termination or FTE reduction occurs before the last class day of a semester. A description of the rules regarding graduate assistant benefits, including tuition fellowships <http://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/guidelines-for-graduate-tuition-fellowships/> and health insurance <http://graduate.auburn.edu/graduate-student-health-insurance-program/> at the indicated links.

APPEALING ACTION REGARDING AN ASSISTANTSHIP -- If a graduate assistant wishes to appeal a decision of administrative action regarding an assistantship, including termination, he/she may file a written appeal within five working days of receipt of the department chair's written notice with the dean of that college. The graduate assistant will be notified in writing of the result of the appeal within five working days of the submission of the written appeal. The decision resulting from this process is final and not subject to further appeal.

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