



Nicholls State University
Graduate Studies

GRADUATE ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. General Guidelines	5
2.1. Graduate Assistant Expectations	5
2.2. Appointment of Graduate Assistants	6
2.3. Graduate Assistantship Reappointment Policy	7
2.4. Course Load	7
2.5. Tuition Waiver, Stipend, and Compensation	7
2.6. Duties & Responsibilities	8
2.7. Supervision of Graduate Assistants & Evaluations	9
2.8. Attendance Reports	9
2.9. Causes for Assistantship Dismissal	10
III. Assistantships	10
3.1 Types of Assistantships	11
3.1.1. Graduate Assistant/Non-Teaching	11
3.1.2. Graduate Assistant/Teaching	11
3.1.3. Graduate Assistant/Research	11
3.2. Eligibility for Assistantship	12
IV. Ethics & Sexual Harassment Trainings	12
4.1. Mandatory Ethics Training	12
4.2. Sexual Harassment Training	13
V. Professionalism	13
5.1. The Professional Role	13
5.2. Solving Work-Related Problems	14
5.3. Solving Problems with Peers	14
5.4. Solving Problems with Supervisors	15
5.5. "Chain of Command"	15

VI. Student Rights & Responsibilities	15
VII. Appendices	23
7.1. ENF Form	23
7.2. Graduate Assistant Evaluation	25
7.3 Confidentiality Agreement	26
7.4 Student Agreement	27

I. Introduction

Welcome to your appointment as a graduate assistant at Nicholls State University!

Graduate assistantships are invaluable in that they serve the needs of the University while orienting students to academic life and assisting them in career development. As a graduate assistant, you may be the first contact new students have with the University. This situation poses a great opportunity for you to shape the culture of student life at Nicholls. The University expects graduate assistants to maintain the highest level of academic excellence in the classroom and in scholarship. This assistantship is also intended to facilitate timely completion of your degree program and to effectively orient you to your professional community.

This handbook is intended to help you understand the policies and procedures that structure your appointment as a graduate assistant at Nicholls State University. While this handbook addresses a number of frequently occurring questions concerning graduate assistantships at Nicholls, you are encouraged to direct further inquiries about your position to the Office of University Graduate Studies at (985) 448-4438.

This assistantship is an exciting opportunity for personal growth and career development. We offer many resources to assist you with this endeavor, so do not hesitate to reach out.

Good luck and Geaux Colonels!

II. General Guidelines

2.1. Graduate Assistant Expectations

A graduate assistant is defined as a graduate student who has been accepted into a graduate program and who is receiving compensation in return for the performance of assigned duties.

Graduate assistantships are contractual agreements between the student and the University. A tuition waiver and semester stipend is awarded with the student agreeing to provide service to the university. Service agreements by students are as follows:

20 hours per week in a regular semester (A regular semester is defined as 16 weeks) *Graduate assistants will work 21 hours and 15 minutes per week for the Fall 2020 semester*

15 hours per week during a summer session

- Assistantships are awarded on a one-semester basis by the individual department or College; therefore, a separate R-2 (hiring document) must be submitted for each new semester of employment. Reappointment is at the discretion of the employing unit and is contingent upon performance of assigned duties and satisfactory progress toward the degree as well as the needs of the department. All assistantships are subject to budget approval and funds availability.
- Application forms for graduate assistantships are only online. These forms are available online at <http://www.nicholls.edu/human-resources/forms/>.
- Students with full time employment are ineligible for graduate assistantships, except in cases of individuals on leave from full time employment.
- A graduate assistant is expected to earn a minimum of six hours of course work from their degree program (three hours during a summer session) with a maximum of 12 hours from their degree program during a semester (six in a summer session).
- The only acceptable courses outside of the degree program are courses described as “foundation” courses or program prerequisite courses AND will only be approved by the Director of University Graduate Studies with a letter of explanation from the graduate assistant’s program coordinator or major professor. If a graduate assistant enrolls in any other courses, he/she will be responsible for the associated tuition and fees.
- In the final semester of the degree program, a graduate assistant must register for at least one hour. For graduate assistants, six semester hours during a semester and three semester hours during a summer session will constitute a full-time load. Students enrolled in graduate programs may hold an assistantship for a maximum of six semesters.
- Non-master’s Alternative Certification students with NMCP classification may hold an assistantship for a maximum of three semesters. NMCP students holding assistantships

must meet the same minimum course progress toward completion of certification as other graduate assistants pursuing a specific master's degree.

- Nicholls assures equal opportunity for all qualified persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, and similar considerations. (Please refer to the section on Student Rights and Responsibilities in the front of this Catalog.

2.2. Appointment of Graduate Assistants

A completed application, transcript(s), resume', and three recommendations (*Graduate Assistant Recommendation* form included with application) are required. Graduate Assistant applicants must also complete the following two forms: *Employment Application* and *Criminal Background Check*. These forms are available online at <http://www.nicholls.edu/human-resources/forms/>

- All graduate assistant applications are routed through the student's graduate program coordinator; therefore, the completed application and required documents should be submitted to the appropriate program graduate coordinator within each college.
- The applicant must be admitted into a graduate degree program and be registered for a minimum of two courses (6 credit hours) toward their degree (spring or fall) or (3 credit hours) toward their degree (summer) before he or she can be hired as a graduate assistant.
- Students with full-time employment are not eligible for assistantships, unless on leave from that employer.
- Once a department has decided to employ an individual, an R-2 Request for Authorization of Employment is prepared by that unit and submitted online, along with the proper attachments required by Human Resources to the appropriate Department Head, Director/Dean, and/or Vice President for approvals.
- The form then goes through appropriate channels for final approval. The Office of Human Resources will then prepare an Employment Notification Form (ENF) for the signature of the graduate assistant.

STUDENTS COMPLETE ALL paperwork in the Office of Human Resources **FIRST** and then **PAY FEES**.

NO EXEMPTIONS will be applied to fees until paperwork is completed and ENF is signed. (Please see Appendices Section for copy of ENF form)

Upon a student's official appointment to a graduate assistantship, the department should provide the student with information about the position. This information might be provided through a conversation with the faculty or administrative supervisor or through documents specific to the graduate student's program. The graduate student should ask the supervising department for all of

the materials available concerning the position.

2.3. Graduate Assistantship Reappointment Policy

Reappointment is not guaranteed, but a student is eligible to be reappointed provided the following criteria are met and/or based on the recommendation of the student's program coordinator and assistantship supervisor:

- Satisfactory completion of work duties as determined by department supervisor(s)
- Maintenance of a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA
- Completed at least 6 hours of graduate credit applicable to the degree each regular semester OR completed at least 3 hours of graduate credit applicable to the degree each summer semester
- Enrolled full time (at least 6 hours applicable toward the degree during regular semester and at least 3 hours applicable toward the degree during summer semester) each semester
- Availability of funding

2.4. Course Load

Minimum Load

Each semester, the graduate assistant is expected to earn a minimum of six hours of coursework applicable toward the degree. At least a three hour load or registration for comprehensive examinations is expected in a summer session. In the final semester of the degree program, the student must register for at least one hour. A graduate assistant carrying six semester hours of applicable coursework (three hours in a summer term) will be considered a full-time student.

Maximum Load

A graduate assistant may not schedule more than twelve hours during a regular semester (six in a summer session). Exceptions must be approved by the Director of University Graduate Studies.

2.5. Tuition Waiver, Stipend, and Compensation

Compensation for Graduate assistants is two-fold:

1. **Tuition Waiver** – At the beginning of the semester that the assistantship is awarded, students will receive a tuition waiver for most tuition and fees owed for enrollment. The student is responsible for the various “fees” portion of the tuition and fees bill.

2. **Stipend** – A semester stipend will be paid for 20 hours of service work (15 during summer) from the graduate assistant on campus. Stipends may vary because of discipline. Graduate assistants are paid bi-weekly on a semester basis, through direct deposit. Graduate assistants must meet timesheet deadlines. If timesheet deadlines are not met, the student may not be paid for that pay period.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS WHO ARE UNABLE TO PERFORM DUTIES DUE TO ILLNESS OR OTHER REASONS, MAY HAVE THEIR TUITION, STIPEND OR BOTH FORMS OF COMPENSATION COMPROMISED.

2.6. Duties & Responsibilities

- In return for compensation, the graduate assistant has certain duties and responsibilities, which must be carried out. Assistantships are always contingent upon satisfactory completion of the assigned duties. The assistantship may be revoked whenever the duties and responsibilities are not fulfilled. Appointments are normally effective with the first official day of the semester and end with the last official day as stated in the University calendar. One who wishes to resign his or her assistantship is expected to submit a written notification of the resignation to the supervisor or graduate coordinator who will then forward it to Human Resources and then to the Office of University Graduate Studies for processing.
- Graduate Assistants are expected to work twenty hours per week in a regular semester (fifteen in the summer). Specific assignments and work schedules are made in the employing unit. **Graduate assistants are expected to notify their direct supervisor if they are not able to be present for their assigned work schedule.** First-time graduate assistants are required to attend departmental and/or college orientation sessions. Additional orientation activities may also be required.
- Graduate Assistants are not expected to work between semester breaks, nor should they exceed the amount of hours they are expected to work, depending upon the semester they are awarded the assistantship.
- Because of the dual roles as student and employee, graduate assistants assume particular responsibility for upholding the University policy on academic honesty. Violation will result in termination of employment and may result in disciplinary action. Students should refer to the *University Code of Student Conduct* for policy and procedures concerning academic honesty, grievances, and other conduct issues.
- Since graduate assistants represent the university to the campus and community in many of the positions they are assigned, it is expected that graduate assistants will conduct themselves professionally in class, on campus, off campus and online (this includes the use of social media). Additionally, departments on campus may have specific dress

requirements for the job position they may be asked to complete. Therefore, graduate assistants should check with their assigned supervisor to determine if there are any specific dress code requirements for that position.

2.7. Supervision of Graduate Assistants & Evaluations

The assistantship is intended to provide the student with a learning experience which will be useful in the chosen career. The supervisor should provide the guidance necessary to ensure relevant experience. Graduate assistants are expected to notify their direct supervisor if they are unable to be present for their assigned work schedule.

The academic department head employing teaching assistants will designate full-time faculty to supervise and coordinate the work of the graduate assistant. The supervising faculty shall provide teaching assistants with an orientation session, prior to the start of classes, to discuss such topics as instructional strategies, testing, and policies of the department, college, and University. The mentoring faculty will visit each assistant's class for at least one entire class period just prior to mid-term and hold a follow-up conference to discuss the teacher's performance.

Each graduate assistant will be evaluated near the end of the semester, or summer term. The supervisor will assess the performance of the assistant. The assessment is to be used in the reappointment decision-making process.

University Graduate Studies will disseminate forms each semester. Completed evaluations are kept on file in the student's academic college. (Please see Appendices Section for copy of Evaluation Form)

2.8. Attendance Reports

Assistants will be compensated only for hours worked during a pay period and may not exceed 20 hours per week during any pay period. **The limit of hours must be monitored by the departmental supervisors to make sure that the maximum of 20 hours per week is not exceeded without prior approval.** *Graduate assistants will work 21 hours and 15 minutes per week for the Fall 2020 semester*

- Hours missed must be marked as leave without pay on the electronic timesheet. Do not list absences on timesheet if hours are made up within the same pay period.
- Assistants are not eligible to earn vacation, leave time, comp time, or other benefits and are not automatically exempt from income tax withholdings.
- Falsification of time-sheets may result in disciplinary action by the University or even

- criminal charges.
- **Extended absences could also result in forfeiture of the tuition waiver as well.**
 - **Graduate assistants should sign in and out with their supervisor for hours worked on campus. **In extenuating circumstances such as pandemics or natural disasters, GAs may call or email their supervisor in lieu of signing in and signing out.****

2.9. Causes for Assistantship Dismissal

University policy requires that graduate students maintain good academic standing in order to keep their graduate assistantships. Being placed on academic probation is cause for dismissal of a graduate assistantship.

All graduate assistants must maintain a good academic standing with a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher each term. Inability to maintain good academic standing with the University may result in academic dismissal.

If a graduate assistant's overall GPA falls out of good academic standing, s/he will automatically be placed on academic probation. Renewal of a graduate assistantship will then be based on the recommendation of the student's program coordinator and assistantship supervisor, with final approval made by the Director of University Graduate Studies.

Graduate assistants who are terminated after classes begin are required to reimburse the University for the pro-rated share of their tuition and fees. Terminated graduate assistants will then be ineligible for future employment as graduate assistants unless approved by their academic dean.

Other causes for dismissal of graduate assistants include conduct seriously prejudicial to the employing budget unit or to the University, such as infraction of the law or of commonly accepted standards of morality, failure to follow instructions, violation of institutional or system rules and regulations, willful neglect of duty, inefficiency, incompetence, or consistent or excessive tardiness or absenteeism. The foregoing enumeration of causes for dismissal shall not be deemed exclusive.

Graduate assistants with grievances shall follow the University Grievance Procedure for Unclassified Staff.

III. Assistantships

There are different types of assistantships. The student should make sure to understand the responsibilities accompanying her/his position. The present document should help clarify those responsibilities.

3.1 Types of Assistantships

3.1.1. Graduate Assistant/Non-Teaching

A Graduate Assistant/Non-Teaching is an admitted master's-level or specialist-level student providing support for academic departments, programs, faculty, or personnel. Compensation for a student employed under this designation is hourly, so an electronic timesheet must be submitted on a bi-weekly basis. This timesheet is reviewed and approved by the supervisor, who maintains regular supervision of the Graduate Assistant/Non-Teaching. A Graduate Assistant/Non-Teaching may be employed in a college or department office that performs professional or service duties outside of teaching or research. In the case that a GA is assigned to a non-academic university office, the student's duties are not required to correspond directly to her/his graduate program. Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a Graduate Assistant/Non-Teaching receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward her/his degree completion.

3.1.2. Graduate Assistant/Teaching

A Graduate Assistant/Teaching is an admitted masters-level or specialist-level student assigned to teaching or teaching-related duties. They may be assigned as classroom assistants, lab assistants, or other roles directly related to classroom instruction. According to the IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System), a Graduate Assistant/Teaching assists faculty or other instructional staff in postsecondary institutions by performing teaching or teaching-related duties, such as developing teaching materials, giving examinations, and grading examinations or papers. A Graduate Assistant/Teaching must complete a time sheet on a bi-weekly basis. The time sheet is reviewed and approved by the supervisor. A Graduate Assistant/Teaching must be supervised by at least one faculty member experienced in the discipline. Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a Graduate Assistant/Teaching receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward degree completion.

3.1.3. Graduate Assistant/Research

A Graduate Assistant/Research is an admitted master's-level or specialist-level student assigned to research duties. A Graduate Assistant/Research may assist with research related clerical activities but it is expected that a Graduate Assistant/Research has a higher level of knowledge and skill than that required of a GA. The IPEDS defines a Graduate Assistant/Research as one whose "specific assignments are for the purpose of conducting research, regardless of academic discipline, by performing duties such as preparing and conducting scientific research or engaging in original scholarship/scholarly inquiry under the supervision and mentorship of a faculty member or senior researcher."

Compensation for a student employed under this designation is hourly, so an electronic timesheet

must be submitted on a bi-weekly basis. This timesheet is reviewed and approved by the supervisor, who maintains regular supervision of the Graduate Assistant/Research. Research assistantships may be financed through funds from gifts, grants, contracts, state appropriations designated for research, or through the University's internally sponsored programs. A student appointed as a Graduate Assistant/Research works under direct supervision. Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a Graduate Assistant/Research receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward degree completion.

3.2. Eligibility for Assistantship

To be considered for a graduate assistantship, the student must contact the Office of University Graduate Studies or the department in which s/he is seeking an appointment. To be eligible for an assistantship, the student must meet the following minimum requirements:

- 1) The student must be a fully-admitted, degree seeking student at Nicholls State University.
- 2) The student must be enrolled in at least 6 hours of graduate coursework during the fall and spring semesters and in at least 3 hours of graduate coursework in the summer semester.
- 3) The student must be in good academic standing (maintain a cumulative 3.0 graduate GPA).
- 4) The student must complete the graduate assistant application and submit to the coordinator in his or her college.

Additional documents, such as letters of recommendation, a curriculum vita or resume, or writing sample may be required by the department or office.

IV. Ethics & Sexual Harassment Trainings

4.1. Mandatory Ethics Training

Louisiana R.S. 42:1170A requires that every public servant in the State of Louisiana, whether compensated or not, attend a one hour training course on the Code of Governmental Ethics on an **annual basis**.

It is the responsibility of each public servant/employee to undergo this training. The goal of the Louisiana Board of Ethics is to educate all public servants so that they may fully understand the Ethics code and avoid any potential conflicts of interest.

The training is offered online at <https://eap.ethics.la.gov/EthicsTraining/login.aspx>. You may go to the website, register and complete the training. We strongly encourage you to complete the training online as the availability of live training is limited. Once you complete the training, please **print the certificate and send a copy to the University of Graduate Studies Office**.

4.2. Sexual Harassment Training

Sexual Harassment Training is required on an annual basis. Information will be forthcoming once all the details are available. University policies and procedures concerning appeals, grievances, sexual harassment, anti-discrimination, students with disabilities, computer use, alcohol and drug abuse, and smoking are found in the *Code of Student Conduct*. A copy of the *Code* can be obtained in the offices of the graduate coordinators, deans, and Student Affairs. A graduate assistant should be familiar with the *Code* and should consult it if further information is desired. The following paragraphs briefly summarize the policies on sexual harassment and anti-discrimination.

Sexual Harassment

It is the policy of Nicholls State University that no member of the academic community may sexually harass another. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, disparaging remarks and other conduct of a sexual nature constitute harassment when: (one or more of the following)

- They are unwelcome;
- They are made under circumstances implying that one's response might affect academic or personnel decisions that are subject to the influence of the person making such proposals;
- Such conduct is persistently abusive of others and implies a discriminatory attitude or hostility toward their personal or professional interests because of sex; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning or work environment.

V. Professionalism

5.1. The Professional Role

When accepting an assistantship position in the academic enterprise at Nicholls State University, graduate students may find that some aspects of the role are new and unfamiliar. Graduate assistants are considered to be professionals at the beginning of their discipline-based careers in an academic setting. As such, they must recognize that they are agreeing to contribute time and intellectual effort to help with program or faculty needs in exchange for a paycheck, stipend, or tuition support and for opportunities commensurate with the role.

Although the demands of any given graduate assistantship vary according to the specific context of employment, assistants are likely to have specified duties, a set number of hours per week in which the student is expected to work, and a supervisor who will oversee the student's work. Supervisors should be able to communicate with assistants regarding the number of assigned hours per week. A graduate student appointed as an assistant should have a formal discussion

with her/his supervisor about departmental expectations regarding how, where, and when the student commits her/his time.

Graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to adopt high standards of professional behavior. A graduate student engaging in on-campus employment will be establishing her/his professional reputation as someone who is reliable, ethical, and trustworthy. The student will attract new opportunities, build a strong résumé, and develop relationships that will help him or her achieve strong letters of reference for future professional opportunities.

5.2. Solving Work-Related Problems

Nicholls hopes employment as a graduate assistant will be trouble-free; however, sometimes interpersonal problems will complicate the job. Some general pointers can set the stage for effective solutions:

- Graduate assistants (GAs) should recognize that no one will have her/his exact vantage point on the problem, so the GA should strive to explain her/his position clearly and without being defensive.
- Graduate assistants should listen carefully to the position of the person raising the complication.
- Graduate assistants should avoid raising her/his voice, using inappropriate or obscene language, or fueling even worse outcomes by other unprofessional behavior.
- Graduate assistants should focus on the specific behavior that is problematic rather than attributions or motives that s/he thinks contribute to the behavior.
- Graduate assistants should not use email when angry. It generally makes a situation much worse when people cannot rely on body language to clarify real meaning.
- Since some placements require graduate assistants to interact with the public or general student body, GA's should remember they are in a "customer service" role and should interact with individuals with that mindframe.
- If tempers flare, the student may wish to seek the assistance of an appropriate mediator. Contact [Nicholls State University's Student Affairs Office](#) at (985) 448-4022.

5.3. Solving Problems with Peers

Occasionally, difficulties with peers can surface, particularly in competitive contexts. In shared work assignments, a graduate student may find that coworkers may not work as hard as s/he does toward task completion. To prevent such problems, a graduate assistant should try to clarify workload assignments from the outset. The student should inquire early about what may be happening that could contribute to disappointing performance from peers. The student should express disappointment directly to the individual who is generating the problems and ask for cooperation. The student should be prepared for the possibility that the peer may share similar feelings of resentment or that the peer may have mutual disappointments in the contributions or

style of another peer. If the graduate student is unable to come to terms on a more productive and satisfying means of interacting, the student should ask for assistance or mediation from the supervisor.

5.4. Solving Problems with Supervisors

It is possible that a graduate assistant may experience some challenges with her/his supervisor. Examples could include a supervisor having unrealistic work expectations or placing too many demands in too short of a time frame. Adversely, supervisors may neglect their assistants by not showing up for appointments or not fulfilling commitments. Although rare, supervisors may also be insulting or demeaning. Should a negative situation develop with a supervisor, the student should take steps early in the process to identify the problem and seek opportunities for explanation and reconciliation. The student should keep in mind that the supervisor has greater authority and experience in the situation and stay open to the idea that there could be some legitimate explanation for the behavior perceived to be problematic. However, if the student is not able to reach an accord, s/he may want to explore whether a different assignment may be appropriate and/or available.

5.5. “Chain of Command”

When attempting to solve problems, most organizations subscribe to the concept of “chain of command.” In general, this principle entails a first attempt at resolving a problem by directly addressing the person in the organization who is thought to be responsible for the problem. If such an attempt does not result in an amicable resolution, the student seeking to address a problem should go up the chain of command to that person’s supervisor, and so forth. In an academic setting, a student in the classroom would have the following entities to deal with in the academic chain of command.

Graduate Peer->Instructor->Program Coordinator/Department Head->College Dean->Provost->President

Attempts to skip some links in the chain of command when solving problems will most likely be met with resistance. The student can expect to be sent back to the level that was skipped as individuals higher up in the chain of command do not wish to undermine the authority of those whose job it is to address and resolve problems.

VI. Student Rights & Responsibilities

Students have the right to be judged fairly, to be treated with respect, free of harassment and secure in their privacy as individual citizens. The university has policies and procedures which intend to assure these rights.

Students should inform themselves of rules governing college requirements, registration, academic standards, student activities, student conduct, parking, and similar matters, for they are held responsible for knowing and abiding by them.

The university *Catalog* not only enables prospective students and others to learn about Nicholls, but it also states university policies, requirements, regulations, and procedures. This Catalog represents a flexible program of the current curricula, educational plans, offerings, and requirements which may be altered by the university from time to time to carry out academic purposes and objectives. The university reserves the right to change any provision, offering, or requirement at any time within the student's period of study at the university. Rules and regulations of this Catalog supersede those stated in previous bulletins.

The university expects all students to obey the law, to show respect for and obedience to properly constituted authority, to fulfill contractual obligations, and to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in academic work. It also expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid disciplinary action. The program's discipline is administered by the Office of Student Life in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct, copies of which are provided to new students at Orientation.

The experience of living on campus is one of the most important phases of university life. The Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System places the welfare of the student as the top priority in the establishment and operation of all higher education institutions. Positive Board action has been taken in the acquisition and construction of essential housing, dining, student life, and academic facilities for the established institutions. The Board expects students to utilize these facilities to their fullest and in the best interest of all concerned. Therefore, all undergraduate students with less than 90 hours are required to live on campus unless they live at home within the 45 minute commutable range. Exceptions are granted for married students, students with dependents and students living at home. For more information, contact the Office of Residential Living located in the Brady Residential Complex Clubhouse, or call (985) 448-4479.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Students attending Nicholls State University are hereby informed of their right of access to their official records as described in the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and of the confidential nature of those records.

The federal act further provides that directory information about the student may be released by the university unless the student completes a form in the Office of Records and Registration within two weeks after the final day of registration for a semester, or within one week after the final day of registration for a summer session. This must be renewed each semester or summer session.

The following is considered directory information: the student's name, address, telephone listing, electronic mail address, date and place of birth, major field of study, classification, full-time or part-time status, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and honors/awards received, the most recent previous education agency or institution attended, and photographs (for public relations purposes only).

Further information may be obtained from the Office of Records and Registration.

Notification of Rights under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Postsecondary Institutions

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. They are:

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the university receives a request for access.
- Students should submit to the registrar, dean, head of the academic department, or other appropriate official, written requests that identify the record(s) they wish to inspect. The University official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the University official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.
- The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the student believes is inaccurate or misleading.
- Students may ask the university to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the University official responsible for the record, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the university decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, the university will notify the student of the decision and advise the student of his or her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.
- The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
- One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the university in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person or company with whom the university has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor, or collection agent); a

person serving on the Board of Supervisors; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request of another institution, the university discloses education records without consent to officials of such an institution in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the university to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is: Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC, 20202-4605.

Student Complaints and Their Resolution

The State of Louisiana and the U. S. Department of Education have mandated that institutions of higher education have in place a specific procedure for the resolution of student complaints. State and federal governments are most interested in complaints that involve: 1) the mismanagement of federal financial aid funds and 2) false representation of programs and courses of study that may appear in an institution's various publications. Although Nicholls State University adheres strictly to all rules and regulations and represents as clearly as possible to students the information pertaining to their education here, students who may have complaints in either of these areas are encouraged to bring them to the university's attention through the procedure outlined below.

Other complaints may be addressed through the same procedure; however, specific complaints such as those concerning discrimination or harassment and grade appeals must follow the procedures specified in the Code of Student Conduct.

Procedure for Resolution of Student Complaints

1. A student who has a valid, documentable complaint against any office or employee of the university, or about any program or service offered by the university may file a written complaint, along with documentation, either a) with the supervisor of the office, service, or program which provided grounds for the complaint, or b) with that individual's supervisor. The complaint will be recorded in a complaint log, noting the name of the complainant, the grounds for the complaint, and the date of filing. The student must file the complaint within 6 months of the date the alleged incident occurred.
2. The supervisor, the student, and the person giving grounds for the complaint will meet within three workdays of the filing of the complaint to attempt to resolve the matter. The student must be prepared to present a resolution acceptable to him or her. It is expected that most complaints will be resolved at this point. The supervisor will record the outcome of the discussion in the complaint log.

3. If the discussion has ended without resolution and if further investigation is necessary to resolve the complaint, the supervisor will conduct the investigation within the ten workdays following the discussion, keeping notes and documentation of the investigation in a separate file, and will present the results of his or her investigation, along with a recommendation for resolution, during a second meeting with the parties involved. The parties will again attempt to negotiate a resolution acceptable to all. The results of this meeting will be inscribed in the complaint log.
4. If the student does not agree to a resolution as proposed, developed, or modified during the second discussion, he or she may file an appeal to the next University officer in the chain of command, within five workdays of the second discussion. In the appeal letter, the student must state with specificity why he or she believes the proposed resolution to be unacceptable, and why his or her desired resolution is preferable. Upon receipt of the appeal letter, the appeal officer will request that the complaint log page(s) and other records pertinent to this case be forwarded to him or her.
5. The appeal will be decided within ten workdays, based on the student's letter of appeal as well as all notes and documentation produced during the discussions. The appeal officer may speak with all of the parties involved, or with none, if he or she sees fit; however, the appeal officer will not speak with only one of the parties without also speaking with the other(s). The officer will keep notes of these discussions. The decision of the appeal officer will be inscribed in the complaint log (after having been communicated in writing to the student).
6. The student may appeal the decision to the university President, for review and recommendation by the President's Cabinet Appeals Committee. Appeals to the President will be based on the records of the case and the appeal letter submitted by the student.
7. The student may appeal the president's decision to the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System. The Board's review of the matter will be limited to a determination of compliance with established and appropriate procedures at the institutional level.
8. At whatever stage the complaint is resolved, its resolution must be recorded in the log, and a signed and dated copy of the record forwarded to the office of the appropriate vice president. The original will then be returned to the log book of the department where the complaint initiated.

The student is assured that no retaliatory action will be taken against him or her for filing and pursuing the resolution of a complaint. All written and otherwise recorded materials relating to the filing and resolution of student complaints are to be considered education records, and, as such, are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (The Buckley Amendment).

Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination

Nicholls State University assures equal opportunity for all qualified persons without regard to race,

color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or veteran's status in any of its policies or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to, admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Inquiries concerning equal opportunity programs should be directed to the university compliance officer, Room 179, Elkins Hall, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, LA 70310 (985) 448-4050.

The university is ethically committed and legally bound not to discriminate against students, faculty, or staff on the basis of their sex, race, religion, national origin, age, marital status, disability, or veteran's status. A member of the Nicholls community who believes that he or she has suffered discrimination by being denied rights assured by federal and state anti-discrimination laws may file a complaint with either the Dean of Student Life (student complainant) or the Director of Human Resources (faculty or staff) or any other appropriate officer of the university. The complaint will be processed according to the procedure set forth in the Code of Student Conduct.

University Contact With Students Through Electronic Mail

Electronic mail (e-mail) is an official method of contact between the university and students. This e-mail contact applies to all forms of communication including but not limited to matters concerning admissions, registration, financial aid, and academic affairs. Students are given e-mail addresses after their initial registration. Students should check e-mail at least once a week. The university provides computer access for all students by way of open computer labs. For information concerning the use of e-mail and the availability of computers, check the Academic Computing website at <https://www.nicholls.edu/information-technology/academic-computing/> for more information.

Computer Use

The university has a specific policy governing the use and abuse of its computer resources. Students granted access to university computing facilities are required to abide by the established policy for computer use. The policy is stated in the Code of Student Conduct.

The policy against computer abuse is a comprehensive one dealing with all aspects of computer abuse, whether physical or logical. It applies to all university computing facilities including mainframes, minicomputers, microcomputers, and associated equipment and links, as well as software, whether developed by Nicholls or purchased.

Substance Abuse

Nicholls strives to create an environment which promotes and reinforces health and responsible

living, within the context of its educational mission. To this end, and because of the risks to the health and safety of the individual and community, the university opposes the abuse of alcohol and any other drug.

The university is committed to upholding all local, state, and federal laws concerning the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and it will support efforts in the campus community to confront violations of these laws.

The following principles guide the university policy regarding the use of alcohol and drugs:

- Students, faculty, and staff are expected to take full responsibility for their own choices and behavior.
- Abstinence is encouraged and respected in all circumstances
- Activities and functions without the consumption of alcohol are to be promoted.
- The university permits the consumption of alcohol on campus by persons of legal age only at approved university functions and has published specific regulations to this effect. Heavy consumption of alcohol and any consumption of illegal drugs are discouraged. Assistance for alcohol and drug abusers is provided through education, counseling, and referral.
- In conjunction with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, all employees are notified that the illegal use, possession, dispensation, distribution, manufacture or sale of controlled substances is prohibited when on official state business, whether on duty or on call for duty, on or off the work site. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. By law, it is the responsibility of all employees to notify Nicholls State University within five days if they are convicted of violating any criminal drug statute at the workplace, while on official state business or while on call for duty.

Tobacco Use Policy

Use of Tobacco Products

Nicholls State University is a tobacco free campus. Concern for indoor air quality is a trend taking place across the nation. In 1989 the Surgeon General renewed a health education campaign against smoking, and Congress passed legislation restricting smoking on domestic airline flights and began consideration of a bill that further limits advertising for smoking products. Studies have revealed that nonsmokers who breathe second-hand smoke face similar health risks as smoker. As a result, a significant number of corporations and academic institutions now require a completely smoke-free environment.

Nicholls State University has a vested interest in creating a healthful and productive atmosphere for its faculty, staff, and students. Providing a smoke-free environment is a step in establishing

activities that promote a long and healthy life. Therefore, **the use of any tobacco product in any form (smoking or chewing) is prohibited.**

Sexual Harassment

It is the policy of the university that no member of the academic community may sexually harass another. Sexual harassment is defined as:

- Unwelcome sexual advances;
- The use or threatened use of sexual favors as a basis for academic or employment decisions;
- Conduct that creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive academic or working environment;
- Conduct that has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance;
- And other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a person's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity.

Hazing

University students are expected to be partners in the process of fulfilling the mission of the university by creating and maintaining standards within student groups, teams, and organizations that are conducive to personal growth and development. If student groups, teams, and organizations are to play an integral part in the university's plan, they must set standards that challenge each individual to achieve his or her greatest potential. Hazing is the antithesis of this goal, in that it attempts to tear down the feelings of individual pride and self-esteem. For this reason, hazing is strictly prohibited, violates the Code of Student Conduct and state law, and should be reported to the office of Student Life and the Office of University Police.

VII. Appendices

7.1. ENF Form

Graduate Assistant Employee Notification Form (ENF) People Admin Action

Personal Information

Name: N Number:
 Last, First MI

New Hire or Rehire Start Date: End Date:

Job Title: Department:

Pay Frequency: Biweekly Work Status: Part Time: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Rate of Pay: \$ Per Specified Period Per Semester Per Summer

If you accept this Graduate Assistant appointment, you agree to the following:

- The appointment is contingent upon the availability of funds at the University. If budgetary constraints require modification or termination of this agreement, I will be notified as soon as reasonably possible prior to implementation of the change. I understand that this type of change will not affect my tuition waiver.
- My service requirement will total no more than 20 hours per week during fall/spring semesters (15 hours per week during summer semesters).
- I will complete the mandatory employment forms in the required time period (new GAs).
- I will hold no other appointment on campus including, but not limited to, a second graduate assistantship or part-time employment in academic or non-academic units.
- Failure to follow these guidelines may result in my immediate release from my graduate assistantship.
- If I am terminated or resign from my graduate assistantship, I will be required to reimburse the University for the pro-rated share of my tuition and fees.

I understand that this is not an exhaustive list of the rules and regulations for Graduate Assistantships and that I should consult the Department of Graduate Studies for a full list of

rules and regulations, which includes topics such as minimum enrollment hours and grade-point averages.

Comments:

The information on this form is being provided to payroll and is based on the information we have in your file. If you believe any of the above information to be incorrect or if you have any questions, please contact Human Resources at [985-448-4050](tel:985-448-4050) immediately.

Steven H. Kenney, Jr.
AVP of Human Resources & Delegated Appointing Authority

By signing below, I hereby accept the position as stated above.

Graduate Assistant Signature

Date

7.2. Graduate Assistant Evaluation



**Nicholls State University
Graduate Studies**

Graduate Assistant Basic Job Performance Evaluation

Name of Graduate Assistant:

Assigned Department:

Name of Supervising Faculty/Staff/Administrator:

The following is a basic job performance rating scale to be completed by the supervising faculty, staff or administrator at the end of each semester of graduate assistantship employment. Please place an X in the appropriate column. Note: You must double click on the box to insert X.

Attribute	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unable to Observe
Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Etiquette	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperativeness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dependability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accuracy of Work Performed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to Meet Deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall Rating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Would you rehire this graduate assistant OR recommend this graduate student for an assistantship in another position? _____

Is this graduate assistants graduating this semester?

Comments:

Note: Each supervisor must discuss the evaluation with the graduate assistant and have the student sign the evaluation. If the graduate assistant has any comments related to the evaluation, have the student email the comments to University Graduate Studies. In addition, please inform the student that they may schedule a meeting with the Director of University Graduate Studies at any time.

Signature: _____
Graduate Assistant

Date _____

Signature _____
Supervisor

Date _____

Revised May 27, 2020

7.3 Confidentiality Agreement

Confidentiality Agreement for Graduate Assistants

I, _____ (print name), understand that in my capacity as a Graduate Assistant at Nicholls State University, I may have access to confidential and private records of other students, faculty and staff. I agree to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all information to which I may have access, either verbally or written, during my period of employment as a Graduate Assistant. I shall not, directly or indirectly, communicate to any person other than my supervisor, or an individual approved by my supervisor, any information concerning such records, including grades. I understand I am not to access student records or other confidential information except for official work assignments. I understand that a breach of this confidentiality agreement could constitute cause for disciplinary action, including termination of employment and dismissal from Nicholls State University. If I have any questions about confidentiality requirements for graduate assistants, I understand that I can contact the Office of University Graduate Studies.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Student N Number _____

7.4 Student Agreement

STUDENT AGREEMENT

.....
I understand the terms and policies stated in this handbook and agree to abide by these terms and policies as outlined herein. I understand that if I do not agree to the terms, that I am not allowed to continue as a graduate assistant until I have agreed to the terms. I understand that I can obtain a copy of this handbook from the Nicholls State University, University Graduate Studies website. My signature indicates that I have attended at least one New Student Orientation.

Student Signature Date

Student Name -- Printed

Address

Phone number

Email address

