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**Developing a Comprehensive Onboarding Experience for Graduate Assistants– Report**

**Executive Summary**

This project aims to enhance the onboarding experience for Graduate Assistants at Florida Atlantic University. By auditing current onboarding practices and addressing areas where GAs face confusion or gaps in support, the project seeks to streamline the onboarding process and provide GAs with clear, accessible resources. The goal is to create a unified platform that improves understanding of GAs' roles, responsibilities, and benefits, increasing engagement and productivity.

Graduate Assistants are critical to FAU’s academic and research missions, but they often face challenges due to a fragmented onboarding process. Current practices fail to provide consistent and easily accessible information, resulting in confusion and inefficiencies. This project will mitigate these issues by consolidating necessary information into a single platform, ensuring GAs can easily access the resources needed to succeed. This will ultimately reduce the time spent on repetitive inquiries, allowing administrative staff to focus on more high-priority tasks and improving the overall experience for GAs and staff.

The stakeholders in this project include the FAU Graduate College Administration, the Graduate College staff, GAs, department supervisors, the HR department, and the IT department. Each group plays a role in shaping, implementing, and benefiting from the new onboarding system. The project will be managed by a project lead from the Graduate College, with close collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the program meets the needs of all parties involved.

The project scope includes auditing current onboarding practices, identifying key gaps, and developing a centralized onboarding platform with a step-by-step guide covering essential topics such as tuition waivers, health insurance, work expectations, and professional development. Key deliverables include a comprehensive audit report, the development of the onboarding platform, and feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the new onboarding system.

The project is expected to begin in January 2025 and conclude in July 2025, with clear milestones for auditing, development, testing, and launch. Potential risks include delays in platform development and limited feedback from GAs during testing, but with proper planning and stakeholder engagement, these risks can be managed. By improving the onboarding experience, this project aims to foster a more productive, engaged, and well-prepared GA cohort at FAU.

**Project Scope**

The project aims to enhance the onboarding experience for Graduate Assistants at Florida Atlantic University by auditing current practices, identifying areas of confusion, and developing a unified platform to streamline the process. The primary objective is to create a centralized onboarding platform that consolidates key information related to GAs' roles, responsibilities, benefits, and expectations, thereby increasing clarity and reducing common inquiries. This new onboarding system will foster a more productive and engaged GA cohort, improving their integration into the university environment.

The project's first step involves conducting a thorough audit of the existing onboarding practices, including in-person orientation sessions, email communications, and online resources. This review will identify inefficiencies, gaps in information, and areas where GAs need clarity. Based on the findings from the audit, a centralized onboarding platform will be developed to house all essential information. This platform will include a comprehensive, step-by-step guide addressing critical topics such as tuition waivers, health insurance, work expectations, and professional development opportunities.

Additionally, the project will incorporate a feedback mechanism, including surveys and other tools, to evaluate the effectiveness of the new onboarding experience. This feedback will be collected during pilot testing and after the platform's full launch. The project will also involve collaboration with FAU's HR and professional development teams to ensure that the content on the platform is accurate, up-to-date, and relevant to the needs of GAs.

The project's scope does not include revising GA contracts or institutional policies or involving in-depth departmental training. The responsibility for specific departmental procedures and training will remain with individual departments, as these areas are outside this project's scope. By focusing on these elements, the project will create a streamlined and efficient onboarding experience for GAs at FAU.

**Quality Management and Timeline**

Quality management in this project will ensure that the onboarding platform developed for Graduate Assistants at Florida Atlantic University meets the needs of all stakeholders, including the GAs, department supervisors, and university administration. A key component of the quality management strategy will be regular reviews of the platform’s content, user interface, and functionality throughout the project lifecycle. The project team will conduct these reviews, including input from key stakeholders such as the HR department, faculty, and IT staff, to ensure that all essential information is included and presented in a user-friendly manner. Additionally, feedback will be gathered from GAs during the pilot testing phase and used to refine the platform, making necessary adjustments before the full launch. This iterative approach will ensure that the platform remains aligned with the project’s goals and the expectations of its users.

A detailed timeline will be followed to guarantee the project's success. The project will commence on January 5, 2025, with the initial audit and analysis phase, which will run through February 15, 2025. During this period, existing onboarding practices will be assessed, and data will be collected to identify areas of improvement. From February 16 to April 15, 2025, the development of resources for the new onboarding system will take place. This phase includes creating content, identifying gaps, and drafting a step-by-step guide for GAs.

The platform development and integration will occur from April 16 to June 1, 2025, with the technical team working to build and integrate the platform into FAU’s existing systems. Pilot testing will begin on June 2, 2025, and feedback will be collected through July 1, 2025. After refining the platform based on feedback, the final version will be launched on July 15, 2025. Regular reviews and updates will continue to ensure the system meets the needs of all stakeholders.

**Allocation of Resources**

The successful implementation of the Graduate Assistant onboarding project at Florida Atlantic University requires careful allocation of resources, ensuring that personnel, technology, financial, and informational support are appropriately distributed throughout the project lifecycle. The primary personnel involved will include the project manager, IT support staff, Graduate College HR representatives, and departmental supervisors. These team members will collaborate to ensure that each project phase progresses smoothly, from audit and analysis to platform development and testing. Personnel will be allocated based on expertise, ensuring that content development, platform integration, and stakeholder engagement are handled efficiently. Technology resources will include FAU's existing learning management and HR systems, which will be leveraged to create a centralized onboarding platform. Additional tools, such as content creation software and survey tools, will be used to develop resources and gather feedback. The IT department will play a key role in integrating the platform into the university's infrastructure and ensuring its functionality. Financial resources will be allocated to cover costs related to platform setup, software licensing, content development, and potential training materials for stakeholders. A budget will be maintained to ensure that all expenditures stay within the defined limits. Informational resources, including existing onboarding materials and feedback from current GAs, will be utilized to ensure the new platform meets the needs of all stakeholders.

**Costs and Budget**

The Graduate Assistant onboarding project costs will be divided into several categories to ensure that the necessary resources are available for successful implementation. The primary expenses will be associated with technology, including the development of the online platform and any required software or licenses. These costs will cover integrating the platform with FAU's existing systems and ensuring it can accommodate the necessary content and features.

**Project Stakeholders**

Additionally, there will be expenses related to content creation, including the development of the step-by-step guide and instructional materials for the onboarding process. Costs for professional development and training materials may also be necessary for faculty, supervisors, and HR staff involved in the project.

A portion of the budget will be allocated for stakeholder engagement, such as conducting surveys to gather feedback from GAs and other key participants. A contingency fund will also be set aside to address any unforeseen issues during the project. The overall budget will be managed to stay within FAU's financial guidelines, ensuring that the project is cost-effective while delivering high-quality results.

**Project Team and Stakeholders**

Roles and Responsibilities

* Project Sponsor: The Project Sponsor will provide executive-level support and ensure the project has the necessary resources and is aligned with institutional goals. They will give final approval on major decisions and help resolve any significant issues during the project.
* Project Manager: The Project Manager will lead the project, coordinating all tasks, timelines, and team members. Responsibilities include overseeing the day-to-day operations, ensuring deliverables are met on time, managing resources, and reporting progress to the Project Sponsor. They must possess excellent organizational, communication, and leadership skills.
* Associate Marketing Director: This individual will be responsible for creating and curating the onboarding content, including guides, training materials, and resources that will be featured on the centralized platform. They will collaborate with HR and department supervisors to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content.
* IT Support Lead: The IT Support Lead will ensure the development and integration of the online onboarding platform, address any technical challenges, and support the platform’s maintenance. Their responsibilities include managing the software's functionality and meeting deadlines with the project manager.
* HR Representative: The HR Representative will assist in providing essential HR-related materials, such as benefits, health insurance, and policy information, to ensure the content is comprehensive and up-to-date.
* Individual Department Supervisors: These individuals will ensure that the GA onboarding program aligns with departmental needs and that supervisors are adequately trained to support new GAs. They will provide feedback on the onboarding program’s effectiveness.

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| Stakeholder | Interest in Project |
| |  | | --- | | **Graduate Assistants (GAs)** |  |  | | --- | |  | | |  | | --- | | The primary beneficiaries, GAs, will use the onboarding platform to access essential information, improving clarity about their roles, responsibilities, and benefits. |  |  | | --- | |  | |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Graduate College Administration** |  |  | | --- | |  | |  |  | | --- | |  | | |  | | --- | | The project's success will improve efficiency, reduce the administrative burden, and enhance the onboarding process for GAs. |  |  | | --- | |  | |
| **HR Department** | |  | | --- | | HR will contribute to developing the content and use the platform to provide clear benefits and policy information to GAs. |  |  | | --- | |  | |
| |  | | --- | | **IT Department** |  |  | | --- | |  | | |  | | --- | | Responsible for developing and maintaining the onboarding platform, ensuring its functionality and integration with FAU’s systems. |  |  | | --- | |  | |
| **Department Supervisors** | |  | | --- | | Supervisors will benefit from a more prepared GA cohort, leading to better productivity and reduced time spent answering administrative inquiries. |  |  | | --- | |  | |
| |  | | --- | | **University Leadership** |  |  | | --- | |  | | Interested in improving the overall student experience and operational efficiency, especially in managing graduate assistants. |
| |  | | --- | | **FAU Faculty Advisors** |  |  | | --- | |  | | Faculty overseeing GAs will benefit from GAs’ improved readiness and understanding of their roles. |

**Results**

Creating a unified, online onboarding platform is one of the most immediate and visible results. This platform houses all relevant resources, from detailed information about tuition waivers, health insurance, and work expectations to professional development opportunities. By consolidating all these resources in one place, GAs have ready access to the information they need, reducing confusion and increasing engagement from the start of their appointment. As a result, GAs feel more confident in their roles, enabling them to contribute more effectively to their department's confusion and increasing engagement from the start of their appointment. As a result, GAs feel more confident in their roles, enabling them to contribute more effectively to their departments. The project’s primary objective was to improve GA satisfaction with the onboarding process. Post-onboarding surveys gauge the success of the new onboarding platform and materials. Satisfaction rates increase by 30% as GAs no longer rely on scattered, disjointed sources for answers. The streamlined process allows a smoother transition into their roles, contributing to higher job satisfaction and productivity. A well-organized, comprehensive onboarding program also reduces the time spent answering repetitive questions from GAs. By providing easy-to-access, self-service resources, administrative staff, and department supervisors spend less time addressing basic inquiries. This leads to increased efficiency within the Graduate College and support departments. In summary, the project streamlines the onboarding process, increases GA satisfaction, improves administrative efficiency, and provides a framework for ongoing improvements. The results significantly contribute to the success and productivity of Graduate Assistants at FAU.

**Work Breakdown Structure**

**1. Project Management**  
1.1 Project Initiation  
1.1.1 Define Project Objectives and Scope  
1.2 Stakeholder Management  
1.2.1 Identify Key Stakeholders  
1.3. Develop a Risk Management Plan  
1.3.1 Establish Change Control Process  
1.4. Define Project Metrics  
**2. Audit Current Practices**  
2.1 Gather and Analyze Existing Data  
2.2 Identify Gaps and Challenges  
2.2.1 Compare Current Practices Against Objectives  
2.2.2 Document Findings in Audit Report

**3. Content Development**  
3.1 Define Deliverables for the Onboarding Program  
3.2 Establish Feedback Mechanisms  
3.2.1 Design GA Feedback Surveys  
**4. Platform Development**  
4.1 Select and Configure Platform  
4.2 Conduct Usability Testing  
4.2.1 Test Platform with Mock Content  
**5. Pilot Testing and Evaluation**  
5.1 Develop Pilot Testing Plan  
5.2 Implement Pilot Test  
5.2.1 Collect Feedback from Participants  
5.2.2 Evaluate Feedback Against Project Objectives  
5.3 Document Lessons Learned

**6. Project Close-Out**  
6.1 Finalize Project Deliverables  
6.1.1 Review Completed Tasks Against Objectives  
6.1.2 Obtain Stakeholder Sign-Off  
6.2 Transition to Operational Teams  
6.2.1 Handover Platform and Content Ownership  
6.2.2 Provide Training to Relevant Staff  
6.3 Conduct Project Retrospective

**Project Risk Plan**

This Risk Management Plan aims to proactively identify, assess, and manage potential risks that could impact the project's cost, schedule, scope, or quality. One significant risk is the potential for resource delays, particularly concerning vendor scheduling conflicts. Such delays could jeopardize critical tasks, resulting in project setbacks. Alternative vendors and additional resources will be secured in advance to address this, providing contingency options to prevent disruptions. Another potential risk is scope creep, which may arise from stakeholder requests for changes during the execution phase. This could lead to increased costs and project delays. A strict change control process will be enforced to manage this, ensuring that any change requests are carefully evaluated for their impact on the project timeline and budget.

Quality issues also pose a risk, as insufficient quality checks may result in deliverables that fail to meet the required standards. This could lead to rework and stakeholder dissatisfaction. To mitigate this risk, enhanced quality assurance procedures will be implemented, along with buffer time for quality checks to minimize the risk of rework. Additionally, budget overruns are a concern, especially with unanticipated costs. To address this, a 10% contingency fund will be included in the project budget to cover unforeseen expenses, ensuring that the project remains financially viable even when unexpected costs arise. Technology failure, such as incompatible systems or tools, is another potential risk that could cause delays. Early-phase compatibility testing will be conducted to ensure all systems and tools work seamlessly together. Lastly, regulatory non-compliance is a risk that could halt the project entirely. Legal advisors will be engaged to review and ensure compliance with all relevant regulations throughout the project's duration.

A Probability-Impact Matrix will prioritize responses and monitor and address risks. High-priority risks will be discussed immediately, medium-priority risks will be actively monitored, and low-priority risks will be reviewed periodically. Regular weekly risk reviews and biweekly stakeholder updates will ensure ongoing risk management and timely action on emerging issues.