

Resident Assistant

The Resident Assistant (RA) is an essential figure in the University's efforts to create inviting, intellectual, and inclusive residence halls. As an RA, you will have great impact on your students in a variety of ways. You are not "in charge of" your students; rather, you are responsible for and accountable to them – your goal as an RA is to build, foster, and manage an academic community of young adults. This position is complex and you will take-on many challenges as you serve the needs of your residents and your University.

The duties and responsibilities of an RA are numerous and overlapping. The description that follows is long but in no way comprehensive; the success of an RA is measured by exceeding the expectations described herein and not merely meeting the minimum competencies required.

The Department of Residential Life believes that RAs have three main roles in their work with students: as an EDUCATOR, a COMMUNITY LEADER, and an ADMINISTRATOR.

EDUCATOR

Everyone at the University at Albany has a stake in its educational mission. One of an RA's roles is to be a peer educator. Through active and passive programming, role modeling, and regular contact with students, RAs have the ability to have a positive impact on students' educational experience at the University.

Programming

Residence hall programs are educational and community-building activities created, executed, and evaluated by Resident Assistants. Educational programs are aligned with one or more of the department's learning outcomes and are designed using established techniques of good pedagogy.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Complete the programming requirement for Resident Assistants as described in the staff manual and by supervisors.
- Adequately advertise for programming (whether it is one's own program or in support of another program) through postings, electronic media, or other appropriate means.
- Utilize resources (funds, gift cards, equipment, etc.) in a responsible manner and in accordance with departmental policy.
- Complete all associated paperwork (proposals, evaluations, invoices/receipts, etc.) correctly and by the prescribed deadlines set by supervisor(s).
- Actively support quad, departmental, or University programming through advertising, attendance, and by motivating resident students to be involved.

Peer Advising

As representatives of the department and University, Resident Assistants are expected to remain objective when a conflict arises in the community or when students solicit the RA for advice or peer counseling. In many cases, the primary role of the RA will be to refer students to appropriate resources for help.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Have a general knowledge of on- and off-campus resources to which to refer students for the variety of concerns that may arise (academic, mental and physical health, wellness and nutrition, etc.)
- Respect students' privacy when addressing concerns while also following all prescribed reporting obligations as outlined in the staff manual and by supervisors
- Exercise appropriate listening and peer counseling skills as described in staff training and coursework, manuals, and by supervisors.

Role Model

"Life in a fishbowl," as it is called, requires RAs to be constantly aware of their actions as one of their most important responsibilities is to lead by example. It is through their responsible behaviors that RAs can exert unspoken influence over their residents so that they may act in a similar manner.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Abide by the policies and stipulations outlined in *Community Rights and Responsibilities*; the Residence License; the staff manual; the terms of the Resident Assistant Appointment Form; this document; and all local, state, and federal laws.
- Convey a positive attitude toward the Resident Assistant position and its duties and responsibilities as well as toward the Department of Residential Life and the University at Albany.
- Show respect for persons of all backgrounds, races, sexual orientations, religions, abilities, genders, etc. The RA will abide by all sexual harassment and non-discrimination policies in his/her relationships with fellow staff members and students.
- Utilize electronic media (e.g. personal websites, online social networking, photographs, video and audio recordings, email, instant messenger, and phone/voicemail) in ways that are consistent with the expectations of the RA position.

Diversity

The Department of Residential Life is committed to providing environments free from harassment, discrimination, and intolerance in order to fulfill the University's mission of a diverse campus. Resident Assistants serve as key educators for the value of diversity in the residence halls, for it is from a broad range of perspectives that knowledge is expanded and deepened.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Treat all students equally without regard for sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious background, physical ability, veteran status, or any other characteristic as outlined in appropriate non-discrimination policies.

- Confront hate or bias-related behaviors, statements, or incidents using protocol established in staff training, departmental policy, and by supervisors. This includes but is not limited to verbal or written statements, derogatory jokes, and graffiti.

COMMUNITY LEADER

The goal of the Resident Assistant is to build, foster, and manage an academic community of young adults. In pursuit of this goal, the RA must lead that community through activities that promote interaction, communication, mature decision-making in order to make the residence hall less imposing and more inviting – a Home Away from Home.

Social Programming

In addition to educational activities, Resident Assistants must engage their sections in activities designed to promote community among residents in the residence halls. These programs serve a vital function in making residents feel “at home” in an otherwise strange environment.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Create and execute social programming on an ongoing basis in order to build rapport and a sense of community in their assigned sections or halls.
- Utilize appropriate timing in order to optimize the effect of social programming (e.g. beginning of term socials, mid-term study parties, etc.)

Hall/Floor/Section Meetings

Resident Assistants are primary communicators of information provided by the University, the Department of Residential Life, and other appropriate sources. Meetings with residents provide an important venue to disseminate this information as well as address concerns among residents.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Conduct meetings of the residents of their respective halls/floors/sections according to an agenda provided by professional staff or on an ad-hoc basis as needs arise.
- Advertise for and take attendance at said meetings, ensuring that all students in their respective halls/floors/sections have notice of and access to the meetings.

Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards are important passive ways to inform residents of resources and upcoming events. Resident Assistants are typically assigned one or more boards in their sections; one of these boards should be an informational resource. Other boards can be used for passive programming; information on this can be found in the staff handbook.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Maintain and consistently update an attractive and informative bulletin board highlighting student resources and upcoming events
- Regularly remove outdated materials from bulletin boards.
- Replace damaged bulletin board decorations and contents within a reasonable timeframe designated by professional staff.

Visibility

Resident Assistants' effectiveness in their role is primarily contingent upon their presence in their sections. In order to be viable resources for students, RAs must be available and open to interaction.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Be in their sections, consistently and deliberately, so students can access them for advice, peer counseling, referral for services, or other needs.
- Advertise their availability to the residents of their sections/halls/floors.
- Check-in with each room/suite in their assigned area at least once per week.

Section Environment

RAs set the tone for the place in which their residents live. In addition to regularly updated bulletin boards, RAs must do "the little things" in order to acknowledge their residents needs and importance. Each RA will have his/her own approach to effective interactions to foster community, but there are basic essentials expected of all staff members in order to ensure the mission of the department is met.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Prepare and post door tags and other welcoming signage prior to the students' arrival at opening each semester as well as prepare similar welcoming paraphernalia for students arriving mid-semester.
- Create and post attractive and inviting signage (birthday boards, message boards, achievement boards, etc.) in order to foster positive community.
- Appropriately decorate any lounge or common space in their sections/halls/floors and maintain decorations throughout the academic year.

Conflict Resolution

Resident Assistants are often called upon to resolve conflicts that arise between residents. In this process, RAs are expected to encourage good communication and cooperation between the two opposing individuals or groups in order to bring a satisfactory conclusion to the conflict.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Utilize appropriate conflict resolution methods as described in training materials and by supervisors in mediating disputes between residents.
- Refer students to professional staff, the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility, or other appropriate resource for serious conflicts or cases involving possible violations of University policy.

ADMINISTRATOR

Efficient management of the residence halls is dependent on administrative processes executed by the Resident Assistants.

Incident Management & Reporting

In the context of residence hall incidents, the RA becomes an “agent” of the University and as such is obligated, whether on or off duty, to respond to and report those incidents in a manner consistent with protocol and/or the instructions of supervisors.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Respond to emergency situations in accordance with departmental protocol and instructions of professional staff or first-responders. These situations include, but are not limited to, power outages, floods, weather emergencies, verbal or physical altercations, sexual assault, medical emergencies, mental health crises, suicide, robbery, fire alarms, and building/quad evacuation.
- Address and report violations of University policy in accordance with departmental protocol and instructions of professional staff. These situations include, but are not limited to, underage consumption or possession of alcohol; illegal drug possession or use; and quiet/courtesy hours violations.
- Correctly and completely fill out the Incident Report Form (IRF) immediately following an incident and then submit it for review by the Quad Coordinator in the manner dictated by quad staff policy and/or departmental protocol.
- Inform supervisors each time the RA enforces policy or otherwise exercises the authority afforded them.

Duty

In order to respond appropriately to emergency situations, violations of University policy, or other incidents requiring staff presence, Resident Assistants share in an on-duty rotation for the five weeknight and two 24-hour weekend shifts each week. During this time, duty RAs serve as the primary Residential Life contact for students.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Perform all responsibilities related to being “on duty”. This includes, but is not limited to, being available to students and staff via room and departmental cell phones; being responsible for duty and master keys; and conducting scheduled or ad-hoc rounds at times assigned by departmental protocol and/or by professional staff.
- Respond to, address, and report emergency situations and other incidents as described in this document (see Incident Management & Reporting), the staff manual, staff training, and by professional staff members.
- Follow the instructions of the Director-on-Duty in all matters pertaining to duty assignments, protocol, and incident management.

Openings & Closings

In order to execute the efficient, safe, and proper opening or closing of the residence halls, RAs are required to perform certain duties and functions that provide for the maximum possible security of the residence halls and during certain breaks, of the belongings of residents.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Report for work prior to residence hall opening and remain at work after residence hall closings for a period described by supervisors. Reporting dates and work assignments are at the discretion of the Department of Residential Life professional staff members.
- Execute all check-in and check-out procedures as described in the student staff manual, training, and by supervisors.
- Prepare the residence halls for openings and closings through appropriate informational meetings and announcements, postings, and other assignments as described by professional staff.

Facilities

The physical environment in which the students reside has great impact on their happiness and well-being. RAs are important in the regular upkeep and maintenance of the residence halls in order to ensure a safe and inviting place for students to live and learn.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Inspect common areas (hallways, bathrooms, lounges, etc.) regularly for maintenance and custodial concerns and report them to the quad office and supervisor.
- Assist students in reporting custodial and maintenance concerns in suites and bedrooms.
- Encourage and role model cooperation with and respect for Physical Facilities staff including cleaners, janitors, and maintenance/repair personnel.
- Follow-up with facilities concerns they notice or reported to them.

General Administration

“Administrivia,” as it is often called, comprises a portion of RAs’ responsibilities that are sometimes sporadic but nevertheless essential in the efficient management of the residential facilities. What follows is not an exhaustive but rather typical list of assignments given to staff.

Resident Assistants are required to:

- Distribute and collect survey materials as required by the department, the division, and/or University using the instructions provided by staff.
- Complete room assignment forms as distributed by professional staff.
- Report vacancies or unauthorized room changes to professional staff.
- Report for additional or “extra” duties for certain University or departmental functions as described by supervisors. Examples include Fountain Day, ParkFest, and Clash of the Quads. Type of work assignment, length of obligation, and nature of duties are at the discretion of the professional staff.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

The RA position is expected to be the next priority to academics and family obligations. RAs are expected to plan for at-home family events, tests, papers, and other commitments so that they do not unduly interfere with the requirements of their position. The following policies and expectations are in place to ensure the efficient and uninterrupted management of the residence halls; a high baseline performance of all staff; and, most importantly, that the staff can maintain a healthy balance of academic and nonacademic commitments.

Grades and Academic Commitments

- Resident Assistants must maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative grade point average in order to be hired for and maintain their positions.
- If an RA's cumulative grade point average falls between 2.25 and 2.5 while in the position, the RA will be placed on probation for a maximum of one academic semester provided it is mathematically possible to raise the cumulative GPA to 2.5 within that amount of time. Otherwise, the RA will be deemed ineligible for reappointment/continued appointment.
- If an RA's cumulative grade point average falls below a 2.25, the RA's continued appointment will be at the discretion of the Quad Coordinator of the RA's assigned quad and will only be maintained if it is mathematically possible to raise the GPA back to 2.5 within one academic semester while not unduly compromising the RA's well-being or job performance. Otherwise, the RA will be deemed ineligible for reappointment/continued appointment.
- If an RA's semester grade point average falls below a 2.5 for two consecutive semesters even if the cumulative GPA stays at or above 2.5, the RA may be placed on probation or deemed ineligible for reappointment/continued appointment at the discretion of the direct supervisor and Quad Coordinator.
- Co-curricular commitments (student organization membership/executive board member, research assistantship, student teaching, teaching assistantship, athletics, etc.) should be discussed with and approved by the Quad Coordinator and supervisor. While staff members are encouraged to be an active part of the campus community, these commitments must be carefully balanced with the demands of the RA job in order to avoid negative impact on the RA's performance and section community.

Outside Commitments

- Employment beyond the RA position must be approved in writing by both the supervisor and Quad Coordinator prior to beginning said employment (if outside employment is held at the time of RA appointment, said employment must be discussed with and approved by those individuals as well). If approved, the RA is permitted to work a maximum of fifteen (15) hours per week. Commitments related to outside employment are not approved reasons to miss Residential Life obligations (meetings, programs, trainings, etc.). The supervisor/Quad Coordinator reserves the right to revoke approval for outside employment at any time.
- A healthy and functional section community is best facilitated through RAs' consistent and deliberate presence, even when not on duty, and weekends are a opportune times to build community and interact with residents. RAs should plan to be present and visible on the quad/in the campus community at least three weekends per month. If more time away from campus is necessary for any reason, RAs are expected to communicate with their immediate supervisor (RD). Excessive time spent away from campus will be reflected in performance reviews and may be used as rationale for decisions regarding continued - or reappointment.
- RAs are expected to reside in their respective rooms. The following are prohibited:
 - Regularly residing in another location (whether on or off campus), such as a friend's room, a significant other's room, etc.
 - Entering into a lease that is concurrent with the RA appointment.

Hall Assignment

- Residential Life reserves the right to change staff room assignments at any time, especially if it is in the best interest of the RA and/or the residents.
- Transferring to another hall mid-year or between years is not permitted except at the discretion of the appropriate Quad Coordinator(s).

Staff Meetings/Training:

- Attendance and participation at All-Staff meetings is required. All-Staff meetings usually occur monthly.
- Attendance at regularly scheduled staff and one-on-one meetings is required; these usually occur weekly.
- Attendance and participation at all sessions during the Fall and Spring Training is required. RAs will not be excused from training except for UAlbany-specific academic requirements.
- Enrollment in and then the successful completion of ECPY 301 and 302 are required for appointment, continued- or re-appointment to the RA position.
- Training of some RAs in specific areas of expertise may be requested. Self-selected workshops may also be required.

Alcohol

- RAs must exercise good judgment when making decisions regarding alcohol use.
- RAs under the age of 21 may not consume or possess alcohol or alcohol paraphernalia (empty containers, funnels, etc.).
- Of-age RAs are prohibited from drinking with or providing alcohol to underage students.
- Of-age RAs should refrain from drinking to excess, storing alcohol in common areas or places reasonably accessible to underage students, and from possessing more than the amount allowed in the Bulk Containers policy as outlined in *Community Rights and Responsibilities* and the Residence License.
- No staff member may be in the presence of the illegal use of alcohol except in response to a violation of alcohol policy or applicable law.
- RAs may not use alcohol prior to or while on duty.

Drugs

- RAs are prohibited from using and distributing any illegal drug.
- RAs are prohibited from abusing and distributing any prescription medications; RAs are prohibited from abusing over-the-counter medications and may only distribute same at the direction of the department (ex. Flu "Kits", etc.)
- RAs may not be in the presence of a violation of applicable drug policies or laws except in response to that violation.

Electronic Media and Websites

- RAs may not post items of an offensive or sexual nature.
- Depictions of or comments alluding to policy violations are prohibited.

Key Control

- RAs must gain permission of a member of the professional staff (usually the Director-on-Duty) in order to obtain and use the master key ring or “recess” keys.
- RAs are expected to use master keys/recess keys only in administrative procedures (opening/closing, maintenance procedure) or when necessary in emergency situations.
- RAs are prohibited from using master keys for inappropriate access to student rooms, restricted administrative offices, or mechanical areas including the maintenance tunnels. RAs are expected to follow key control procedures as specified and report any losses.
- RAs are subject to disciplinary action if master keys/recess keys under their supervision are lost or misused. This includes probation, termination of employment, and/or reparations.

Performance Appraisal

- RAs' performance will be based on fulfillment of duties as well as the terms and conditions that are included in this document.
- RAs judged to be performing below-average; or who fail to fully meet the requirements of the position as outlined in this document or as described in training or by supervisors; or who violate the policies and expectations described in this document, the Residence License, or *Community Rights & Responsibilities* are subject to disciplinary action. This includes:
 - Verbal Warning – given by direct supervisor
 - Written Warning – given by direct supervisor
 - Probation – given by Quad Coordinator
 - Termination – at the discretion of Quad Coordinator
 - Any of the above may include certain conditions such as extra training, additional work assignments, or other reasonable condition as determined by supervisor or quad coordinator.
 - The above constitutes a hierarchy of disciplinary statuses; however, assignment of status is at the discretion of professional staff as well as the nature of the condition that leads to disciplinary action.
- RAs will participate in an evaluation process, which may include input from residents and co-workers, each semester. Solicitation of and appropriate use of input is at the discretion of professional staff members.
- Decisions regarding renewal for an additional academic year will be based on performance evaluations and the RA's reapplication; renewal for the following academic year is at the discretion of the Quad Coordinator in consultation with the RA's current supervisor.
- Renewal in the position may be contingent upon certain conditions, such as probation, extra training, additional work assignments, or other reasonable conditions as described by the Quad Coordinator.
- RAs judged to be at a below-average rating in evaluations; or who commit actions unbecoming the RA position; or whose reapplication is determined to be insufficient for reappointment (as judged by the Quad Coordinator) may not be renewed for the following academic year. This rule applies to all staff members regardless of disciplinary status (warnings, probation).
- Termination by Employer
 - Improper performance or non-performance of the duties and responsibilities described in this document, in training, and by professional staff, or any other behavior which in the judgment of professional staff may significantly affect the ability of the RA to discharge the duties of the position may result in termination of employment. Decisions regarding termination will be made by the Quad Coordinator who supervises the area where the RA is employed. The Resident Assistant will have the right to a review of the reasons for such termination.

I have read the description of the duties, responsibilities, policies, and expectations related to the Resident Assistant position and agree to abide by the stipulations of this document, the terms and conditions of the Residence License, and the code of conduct as outlined in *Community Rights and Responsibilities*.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____