

Teaching Assistant (TA) Job Description- Fall 2020

RAP Seminar Instructor

Name of Instructor _____ RAP _____

RAP courses provide the framework for first-year college students to master course content, cultivate academic skills and develop valuable relationships with instructors and peers. The general **mission** of RAP is to foster student success and satisfaction academically, personally and socially, while increasing retention and student progress toward graduation.

PRIMARY RAP GOALS

Related to student experience:

- Support first-year students in achieving a **smooth transition** to college life.
- Promote the concept that attending to personal wellbeing is directly related to student success. Connect students to resources that enhance healthy living strategies that are essential for academic and personal success.
- Ensure first-year students are aware of the **multitude of** academic and co-curricular **opportunities** available.
- Provide first-year students with structured guidance in the development/advancement of various **skills** necessary to be successful in college and be prepared to be **engaged members of a global community upon graduation**.

Related to instructor experience:

- RAP will provide support to instructors in their work; from syllabus development, exploring type of assignments, rigor/student workload, classroom dynamics, and interactions with and any concerns regarding students.
- RAP will provide opportunities for instructors to learn and grow through group meetings with other instructors (from various departments), mid-semester evaluation tool, as well as individual meetings with RAP staff.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Qualifications:

- Experience working with first-year college students or willingness to participate in training
- Understanding of and agreement to comply with the *RAP Specific Responsibilities* (see below)
- Consent of department/college

Teaching Responsibilities:

Common Content

Every First-Year Seminar will contain the elements of the common content which attend to the following themes/goals:

1. **Enhancing Engagement:** Ensure students are well informed about the wide array of opportunities and campus resources that will assist them and enhance their college experience.
2. **Building Connections:** Foster students' understanding of the transition from high school to being part of a college community and the core values and community standards defining what it means to be a member of the UMass Amherst community.
3. **Self-Guided Learning:** Introduce students to the importance of utilizing mindful time management, targeted study strategies, and intentional planning for academic achievement and pathways to success.

Curriculum:

- Engage students in activities that explore the seminar topic.
- Incorporate information from the **Student Success Planner & Handout** (available on line) into the seminar.
- **Require** students to complete:
 - One reflection activity verbally and/or in writing that articulates their expectations for the RAP Seminar experience
 - **Optional:** Have your students to attend a "RAP Well-Being Workshop". Details to be provided.

Methods: Establish a dynamic classroom environment that:

- Affirms student identity throughout the semester; employ age/course appropriate activities that provide opportunities for students to become better acquainted with their classmates with a goal of building a stronger **class community**.
- Utilizes local newspapers, websites, field trips on and off campus, guest speakers, small group and/or individual activities and/or group projects to explore the seminar topic when possible.
- Encourages students to make academic, social, and extra-curricular connections across the university and the surrounding community.
- Supports first-year students in achieving a smooth transition to the college life:
 - Encouragement of speaking up in class, sharing experiences and asking questions
 - Utilizing technology opportunities such as Moodle discussion
 - Encourage students to seek assistance with any concerns by utilizing office hours as well as through other support venues across campus

RAP meetings/collaboration	When	Where
<p>What: Meet with Kathy (kathyw@umass.edu) or Maureen (porter@acad.umass.edu) before TA contract is submitted to Graduate Assistantship Office for processing</p> <p>Why: To understand expectations of a RAP instructor and confirm that it's a good fit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW INSTRUCTORS: learn about RAP mission, goals and structure and introduction RETURNING INSTRUCTORS: discuss and reflect on prior experience. Learn about any changes for the upcoming year. Discuss common resources that students will be receiving. 	Spring	Goodell
<p>What: Attend a lunch meeting with staff from the residence halls (choose one day from 2 options during week #1 or week #2)</p> <p>Why: Community Development: Meet the folks working with your students in the residence hall and learn about ways that we can collaborate with each other</p>	Early Sept.	Goodell 416
<p>What: Meet 2x with Kathy and/or RAP staff and small group of instructors in a Faculty Learning Community Meeting - week #4 and week #10 of the semester</p> <p>Why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure instructors are learning new tools and skills – growing as teachers. Ensure students are gaining an exceptional experience <p>How:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a facilitated environment, share information with other instructors regarding course content, classroom environment, successful teaching strategies, assessment techniques as well as instructor generated topics. 	Late Sept. AND mid-October	Goodell

RAP Specific Expectations	When	Where
<p>What: Submit seminar description for website</p> <p>Why: Updated seminar descriptions provide timely information for students to choose RAP</p>	Spring	email to Kathy
<p>What: A welcome email.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The RAP office will provide a template that you can personalize Send your edits and confirm that we have your correct UMass email so the students can reply to you if they have questions/comments The email will be sent from the RAP office once enrollment is complete <p>Why: To connect early with students and help them get excited about the fall.</p>	June/July	Email to Kathy
<p>What: Submit syllabus for review and feedback.</p> <p>Why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all elements on the Syllabus Checklist are included, including Gen Ed designation. Ensure that information and expectations are well articulated and easily understandable by first-year students. 	By mid-August	In person or online
<p>What: Facilitate student completion of <i>RAP Mid-semester Feedback Survey</i> during class time week #6</p> <p>Why: Collect feedback for instructors with ample time remaining in the semester to make changes if needed.</p>	Week #6	Classroom
<p>What: Have students complete SRTIs on the last day of class during class time.</p> <p>Why: Get critical feedback for instructors and program analysis.</p>	Last day of class	Classroom
<p>What: Complete end of semester instructor RAP survey (if given).</p> <p>Why: Ensure that the RAP office gets meaningful information that could lead to programmatic changes for subsequent semesters.</p>	By specified deadline	Online