

Teaching Assistant (TA) Job Description- Fall 2021

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 students in achieving a **smooth transition** to college life.
- Provide students with the opportunity to develop **lasting connections** with their peers and instructor.
- Ensure students are aware of the **multitude of resources** and **opportunities** that are available at UMass Amherst.
- Help students embrace the relationship between **healthy living strategies** and academic and personal success.
- Guide students in the **development/advancement of various skills** to achieve success in college and beyond.

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 feedback tool, as well as individual meetings with RAP staff.

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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: *(NOTES: 1. the information below applies whether the course is being taught face-to-face or remotely. 2. Remote instruction is expected to be done synchronously whenever possible.)*

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 online) 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	Via Zoom or phone
<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 or via Zoom (tbd)
<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"> In a facilitated environment, share information with other instructors regarding course content, classroom environment, successful teaching strategies, assessment techniques as well as instructor generated topics. <p>NOTE: Faculty Learning Community Meeting formats may be revised due to COVID-19 if needed. These meetings are OPTIONAL for seminar instructors.</p>	Week #4 and Week #10	Goodell 416 or Via Zoom (tbd)

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>	March/April	email to RAP
<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. Ensure that information and expectations are well articulated and easily understandable by first-year students. 	By mid-August	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