Best Practices for Faculty with Course-Embedded RWAs

Co-authored by Writing Instruction Support and Studio leadership

Background

Course-embedded offerings connect peer-to-peer support for writing and information literacy directly to your students during class time. Embedded Research and Writing Assistants (RWAs) offer one-on-one feedback and peer review; **they are not TAs and they do not grade or facilitate class sessions.**

This document was created from RWA and faculty feedback to share best practices for facilitating collaboration between embedded RWAs and students. It is not intended to be prescriptive, since each course-embedded effort might differ, depending on the needs within the class.

Instructor and RWA roles and responsibilities

- The instructor teaches and facilitates the class.
    - Share lesson plans and relevant assignment descriptions with the RWAs 24-48 hours before class so they know what to expect and can jump right into the class session.
    - Provide guidance and opportunities for RWAs to connect with students in the class.

- Two RWAs consult with students during the class.
    - Review the lesson plans and relevant assignments before class.
    - With instructor guidance, engage with students during classes.

Before or during the first week of class

1. Instructor meets with RWAs to discuss:

    a. Your approach to teaching the course

    b. The relevant assignments in the class. It can help to talk about where students struggled in the past with their research, writing, and reading. Make sure to cover anything you would like them to be aware of.

    c. This can be an opportunity to get RWA feedback on your assignment design from a student perspective.

2. Discuss ways in which RWAs will engage with the class. It is recommended that RWAs be situated as peers with other students to enhance their approachability. Add the RWAs to Canvas (either as **Students** so they can see assignments and updates or as **Teachers** if they will be adding comments on student drafts via Canvas)

3. During the first class, have RWAs introduce themselves (RWAs created template intro slides)

During the Quarter

1. Share your lesson plan or the class day's activities with RWAs before class (RWAs have weekly paid prep time). Be sure to communicate any modifications to assignments, especially if RWAs were not present when they may have been discussed in class.
2. Provide a clear set of expectations for work to be done when RWAs are in class. Some suggestions include:
    a. Brainstorming sessions for research topics
    b. Running peer-review sessions
    c. In-class writing sessions in which the RWAs circulate and offer feedback and support while they draft
3. Communicate regularly with RWAs. We consistently hear from RWAs that they appreciate weekly email communications with instructors because it helps with consistency and awareness.
4. If possible, avoid meeting in computer labs when RWAs are embedded, since labs can make it awkward for RWAs to engage with students.
5. Consider holding a class session in the Studio either for a librarian-led workshop (e.g.,Finding and Using Sources) or a Studio Tour and work session.

RWA recommendations for RWA colleagues

- Meet with the instructor and define expected consulting model
- During the first or second class, introduce yourself, your role, and expectations (you're welcome to use these slides)
- Share your Studio shift hours with the class; these can also be posted on Canvas
- Think strategically about class seating and environment, including where you will be situated
- Practice active listening during lecture and non-consulting activities
- Avoid initial engagement with yes/no questions, such as "Do you need any help today?" Instead, ask what students are working on or other open-ended questions when approaching for check-ins.
- Use prep time for course review and potential asynchronous support (e.g., responding to student drafts)
- Recommend Studio partners for intensive student support