



Bronson University Office of Residence Life RA Training Program

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Overview

Overall the Resident Advisor (RA) Training Program is a blended program that has specific training online and in person.

This presentation will highlight online training and unique additions to the training program.

Why a change?

RA's are a busy group of leaders that are in a unique situation of supporting their resident peers and having their own life as a student.

It is in the best interest of the department and the RA's to ensure they receive the best and most efficient training possible.

As one of the most precious resources an RA's times was taken in account in developing the training program.

This program will ensure RA's are properly focused and able to use their time in the most effective way possible.

Goals of RA Training

- ❑ Build an agile training program that supports new and returning RA's needs
- ❑ Ensure all required and essential training is completed in the most efficient way possible
- ❑ Creatively facilitate RA training while building the RA Community through teamwork
- ❑ Account for variations in RA experiences and building residents
- ❑ Incorporate relevant campus offices to bolster RA resources

RA *Online* Training Overview (Track 1 & 2)

Track 1: RA Foundations: Cornerstone of the online training program. Essential training that all RAs need to help them better engage with students and ensure that their basic needs and concerns are addressed

Track 2: Returning RA's: *This track is meant for returning RAs who need to build upon skills they learned at past RA trainings.*

RA *Online* Training Overview (Track 3 & 4)

Track 3: New RA's: *This track is meant to help solidify basic skills (touched upon in in-person training) new RA's will need for the upcoming year.*

Track 4: Resident Specific Modules: *Considering the varying kinds of residents RAs will encounter (first-years, upperclassmen, non-traditional students) RA's will be assigned a module(s) from this list to help their with their specific kinds of residents.*

Team Building & Mini-Retreats

1. **Ropes Course** - RA's will participate in different activities at the local facility
In effort to develop trust, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking abilities
2. **Scavenger Hunt** - To find key facilities, individuals, and historical places on campus to help build the RA Community
3. **Jeopardy** - To ensure understanding of online modules in an engaging, fun activity that includes prizes as well as fellow RA trivia

Means of Delivery

- ❑ Canvas
 - ❑ Educational platform
- ❑ Time sensitive
 - ❑ All modules must be completed by the end of in-person training
- ❑ Twitter requirements
 - ❑ Social media and peer integration

Twitter Requirement

- ❑ RA's will be required to 'tweet' a minimum of five times.
- ❑ Guidelines for the tweets:
 - ❑ Must have something to do with training (a response to a module, a question etc.)
 - ❑ Must be substantive
 - ❑ Must be respectful
- ❑ RA's must also follow
 - ❑ The professional staff
 - ❑ 10 other RAs
 - ❑ Local chapter of residential life professional society (i.e. ACUHO-I, NEACUHO etc.).

RA Foundations (All)

RA foundations is the cornerstone of the online training program. The module focuses on essential and key training that all RA's need to engage students and ensure their basic needs and concerns are met.

- ❑ Module 1: Unconscious Bias Training
- ❑ Module 2: Life Skills - Helping Your Residents Develop Life Skills
- ❑ Module 3: Self and Self Care
- ❑ Module 4: Students of Varying Abilities
- ❑ Module 5: Seasonal Training

New RA Track

The New RA Track is focused on the fundamentals. These modules deal with essential and key topics that all RA's need to be professional and successful.

- ❑ Module 1: Creating Boundaries
- ❑ Module 2: Using Social Media Effectively
- ❑ Module 3: The Power of Confidence During Incidents
- ❑ Module 4: Programming
- ❑ Module 5: Managing Roommate Conflicts

Returning RA Track

The returning RA Track is focused on RA's progressing both professionally and personally as leaders.

- ❑ Module 1: Becoming a Team Leader
- ❑ Module 2: Taking Programming A Step Further
- ❑ Module 3: Leveraging your RA Experience in the Job Market

Resident Specific Track

The resident specific track focuses training on student groups and environments which are distinct from the general.

- ❑ Module 1: Non-Traditional Students
- ❑ Module 2: First-Year Students (Transitioning to College)
- ❑ Module 3: International Students
- ❑ Module 4: Upperclassmen
- ❑ Module 5: Substance-Free Living

Benefits

- ❑ Sensitive Topics are delivered in-person
- ❑ Online Training will allow for RA's to focus and use their time wisely as they prepare for the semester and arrival of their students
- ❑ Online Modules serve as a reference for all RAs
- ❑ Discussion boards lead to collaboration, help establish strong networks with other offices and can be referenced to help guide practices
- ❑ Information and strategies can be more specific and targeted
- ❑ Time will be saved

References

Bonk, C.J. (2001). *Online teaching in an online world*. Retrieved February 18, 2019 from: <http://www.courseshare.com/reports.php>.

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Goals and Overview

How can the residence life professional staff at Bronson University better equip new and returning Residential Assistants (RA) with the necessary and relevant skills to accommodate the 2019 college student? With the increasing number of topics to be covered during RA training, we needed to find an innovative way of providing RA's information while being cognizant of their time and additional responsibilities as college-going students. Considering RA's go through weeks of in-person training, individuals can easily 'burn out' and lose interest in the important topics being covered. Moreover, repetitive and non-applicable training can be most frustrating for RA's, especially those who are returning to serve for another year. We have designed an online training course meant to enhance the RA training experience and help RAs meet the socioemotional needs of each student.

This online training course is divided into 4 different tracks; "Returning RA's", "New RA's", "All RA's" and "Resident Specific". Each of these tracks contain various modules designed to cover topics we believe are important for RA training, however do not require an in-person session. We envision the online portion of RA training being housed in the educational platform *Canvas*. We believe *Canvas* has features that will not only help us to organize/assign our tracks, but will also make for RA's to collaborate with each other and to incorporate outside sources (including professionals/experts).

Throughout this training, RA's will be required to post on the social media platform Twitter. They must 'Tweet' a minimum of five times. The only guidelines for the tweets are: 1) they must have something to do with training (a response to a module, a question, etc.); 2) they must be substantive; 3) they must be respectful. RA's must also follow 1) the professional staff, 2) 10 other RA's, and 3) local chapter of Residential Life professional society (i.e. ACUHO-I, NEACUHO etc.) on Twitter.

The goals of our online training program are to build an agile program that supports the needs of new and returning RA's, ensures all required and essential training is completed in the most efficient way possible, creatively facilitate RA training while building the RA Community through teamwork, and account for variations in RA experiences. In the coming paragraphs we will address the logistics of each module in addition to the reasoning and importance behind each.

Residential Assistant Foundational Training

The first “track”, RA Foundations, is the cornerstone of the online training program. The modules found in this track focus on essential training that all RA’s need to help them better engage with students and ensure that their basic needs and concerns are addressed.

Module one will be an *Unconscious Bias Training*. The purpose of this training is to try and have each RA recognize their own biases through exercises and team case studies. The training will help support each RA’s reflection and decision-making in the many different environments and circumstances they will face. Representatives from the Office of Multicultural Affairs will also be available to chat online through *Canvas* in an effort to answer any further questions. This module will be presented as a video created by a representative from the Office of Multicultural Affairs with quiz questions embedded throughout.

In Module two, RA’s will learn how to help their residents develop general *life skills*. These skills include but are not limited to: basic dormitory cooking skills, effective use of planners or Google Calendar, laundry services, and many more. For many students, this will be the first time they are away from their home and in a less structured environment. The life skills module helps students learn to manage their day-to-day schedule and also give essential skills needed to live on their own.

Module three will be on *Self and Self Care*. RA’s need to be taking care of themselves in addition to the students they serve. RA’s will be able to best help their students by making clear decisions and minimizing stress. For this module, we will ask a member of the Health and Wellness Center to record an informational video with tips on how to take care of yourself by considering the added stress of being an RA and give attention to the resources that are available not only for residents, but for themselves as well.

Module four will be on *Students of Varying Abilities*. This module will discuss the varying abilities of students and how to interact with them. As campuses become increasingly diverse, student bodies need change to support students in their endeavors. The ability for all students to interact with each other becomes essential therefore all students need to understand how to do so in a positive manner. Similar to most modules in this track, a representative from Disability Services will be asked to create an informative video and will be added as an instructor in the course to interact with the RA’s.

Module five will be on *Seasonal Training*. This module will be a continuing education course, providing RA’s with season-specific safety information designed for dissemination to their residents. It will provide RA’s with resources and tips to help their residents prepare for the upcoming season (i.e. how to prepare their car for the cold, staying hydrated during the summer etc.).

New Residential Assistant Training

Track two: New RAs has targeted content to help solidify essential skills for first-time RA's at Bronson University. We believe it is important to distinguish and create specific support for new RA's in effort to not only better prepare the staff, but to increase the retention rate for RA's.

In Module one, *Creating Boundaries*, returning RA's give open advice to the new RA's about setting appropriate boundaries with their residents. The advice will be posted on discussion boards in *Canvas* where new RA's will be asked to respond and ask questions. For many new RA's, the purpose of taking the job may be to receive free or discounted housing. However, with the title RA they become a leader and need to skills/tools to be able to remain professional no matter the situation. We believe the best way to learn how to set appropriate boundaries is to hear from peers that have experienced it.

In Module two, *Using Social Media Effectively*, new RA's will engage in a video from the Office of Career Services on how to maintain a level of professionalism on social media, while also mobilizing/influencing followers. The reasoning for this module is mainly due to social media becoming a permanent fixture in society, both socially and professionally. Therefore, RA's must have the ability to remain professional on platforms while also using it as tool to support their residents.

How important is it for RA's to maintain confidence during stressful situations? *The Power of Confidence During Incidents* module will assist an RA's ability to manage high stress situations and provide mentorship to residents. Residents look to RA's as confident, decisive, and trustworthy. Therefore, it is pertinent for RA's to manage stressful situations with confidence and courage.

Module four will supplement the in-person training on programming and discuss ways in which to plan and execute relevant programs. In addition, this module will specifically address the importance of reflection after a program is completed. The new RA's will be given a case study of a program and asked to answer reflection questions. RA's will be asked to consider, "What else could I have done? Did I need more time, money, resources? Why did or didn't students attend?" Reflection is important to ensure RA's can adjust to their program to meet the needs of their residents.

Roommate conflicts are inevitable, whether small or large. Module 5, *Managing Roommate Conflicts*, is designed for RA's to learn how to diffuse difficult situations between roommates. The module will include multiple video clips from movies and television shows where friends and roommates argue. RA's will record their reactions on a discussion board and discuss potential solutions. After problem solving on their own, RA's will be presented advice and suggestions for diffusing roommate conflicts such as introducing roommate agreements, discussing the situation with each roommate separately, and inquiring with another resource for assistance.

Returning Residential Assistant Training

Track three: Returning RA's is designed for returning RA's who need to build upon skills they learned in previous trainings as well as develop leadership and mentorship skills. The returning RA's, by default, will be looked to by new staff members as leaders and coaches as they have more experience and knowledge in the field of residential life. Moreover, experienced RA's will not have to repeat learned and practiced material, but rather focus on becoming a mentor to new RA's.

Module one of this track is meant to help support returning RA's become leaders, advice givers, and role models on their team. The module will highlight how returning RA's can mentor their newer counterparts. Mentorship relationships are important for new staff members in any workplace but as students, the returning RA's may not feel prepared to mentor. This module will alleviate those concerns.¹ In Module two, *Taking Programming a Step Further*, RA's will collaborate and identify how to expand and innovate previous programs. A common concern among returning RA's is coming up with new programming ideas. RA's will be presented with new research and programming ideas from various institutions around the United States. Furthermore, RA's will be asked to post their programming activities on a discussion board for other RA's to see. Returning RA's will then be tasked to select one or two new programs they would use from the discussion board and describe how they would implement them into their program.

In Module three, *Leveraging your RA Experience in the Job Market*, returning RA's gain valuable and applicable skills on how to use their acquired skills and knowledge as an RA to get their first job out of college or a summer internship. The module will include a video from a Bronson University Graduate School Counselor and a staff member from the Office of Career Services. This module is truly a professional development tool. The RA position gives you a number of useful skills that are applicable to many different professions. This module is required of returning RA's because they have a minimum of one year of experience to leverage their position, but it will be open to others if/when they need the information.

Resident Specific Training

Considering the varying kinds of residents RA's will encounter, each RA will be assigned a module from the Resident Specific Modules to help them with their specific resident population. These modules will provide RA's with resources and tips to address issues the following populations face: First-Year students, Upperclassmen, Non-traditional students, International students, and Substance-Free living. Every student has a distinct challenge transitioning to college and it is important that residential staff recognizes these pathways and celebrate their residents' identities.

¹ Jennings, M. E. (2007). Adult learning in a workplace setting: Key factors associated with the development of performance and efficacy. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 68(5-A), 1813.

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