



Resident Assistants Information Guide

The Women's College appoints thirteen Resident Assistants (RAs) each year to offer pastoral care and academic support to all students. Each wing has its own Resident Assistant/s who helps students settle into College when they first arrive, promotes activities and programs throughout the semester, and is available for consultation on just about anything from personal to University related matters. The Resident Assistants foster better communication between all groups in the College by acting as a point of contact for students and College staff.

The role of a Resident Assistant is a very demanding one but one that can be very fulfilling. To help you understand the position we have tried to detail the types of duties you will be expected to carry out. However, we must warn you at the outset that College life is unpredictable, and the day to day 'happenings' that Resident Assistants may undertake are very hard to define. The position is time consuming and you will need good organisational skills, both for the carrying out of your duties and the requirements of your own study. In College, anything can happen. The most important qualities you will need are flexibility and a highly developed sense of humour.

ABOUT THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE

The Women's College is a residential college within The University of Sydney and is home to 288 women students drawn from around Australia (both the Sydney metropolitan area and interstate) and overseas. Our students undertake degrees and diplomas at The University of Sydney. The age of the majority of our students is between 18 and 24, with some in their late twenties and older.

The aim of The Women's College is to provide its students with an atmosphere conducive to the achievement of academic excellence and personal development through participation in College activities.

A RESIDENT ASSISTANT AT THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE

The Women's College employs thirteen Resident Assistants who work closely with the Senior Resident Assistant to provide both academic and pastoral care for the students. Resident Assistants are full-time students enrolled at The University of Sydney in their fourth year of an undergraduate degree or are undertaking a graduate or postgraduate degree. The Resident Assistant is expected to have a close involvement in the general life of the College; eating with students in the dining hall, meeting students, participating in College functions and being seen as a person with loyalty to, concern for and responsibility to the College. The duties of a Resident Assistant can be divided into a number of categories and are set out as follows:

Pastoral Care

As many of our first year students are living away from home for the first time, it is essential that we provide them with a supportive and stimulating environment in which they can deal with the transition from family to independent living, as well as cope with the new demands tertiary study places on them. Resident Assistants fulfill an extremely important role in facilitating this: they are responsible for a number of students, determined by the wing of the College in which they live or as designated by the Senior Resident Assistant. While it is hoped that Resident Assistants will interrelate with students across the College, for their particular wing they are required to:

- listen to complaints and take the necessary action;
- establish good relations between the members of their wing. This might seem a daunting task but often it's just a matter of getting the group together early on in the year and at times throughout the year to have a talk (and, usually, to eat some food). At times it might be expedient to have a word to appropriate people to clear up minor problems;
- take an active interest in the well-being of the students;
- conduct wing functions three times a semester. These functions allow you to get your wing together to catch up and run over any problems that might be occurring or celebrate successes amongst the group. A small budget is set at the beginning of the year to allow the Resident Assistant to organise refreshments or to subsidise an evening out;
- recognise students' personal problems and refer them to the Senior Resident Assistant, the Vice Principal or the Principal for professional counselling. At times it may be that a student needs more help than you can give - recognising this is an important part of a Resident Assistant's job - and if necessary, we will refer them outside College for assistance;
- work closely with the Senior Resident Assistant in ensuring that the welfare, both academic and pastoral, of the students are attended to as priority; and
- work closely with the Senior Resident Assistant to ensure a high level of communication and teamwork exists amongst the Resident Assistants.

Being visible and demonstrating care and awareness, is a significant part of what makes an effective Resident Assistant. To be successful, Resident Assistants need to:

- learn the names of all of our students - not an easy task but the students will appreciate your attempts;
- eat in the Dining Hall making sure that you sit with different groups of students;
- attend official College functions, such as Formal Dinners, Faculty Nights and other special events conducted during the year;
- participate in Student Club activities such as the Formal, In-formal, Orientation Week, Arts Week, International Night, Re-Orientation Week, Victory Dinners, etc.;
- play sport for the College - or be an enthusiastic spectator;
- attend/participate in cultural activities conducted within the College e.g. First Year Revue, Cabaret, College plays, musical concerts, etc.;
- assist in team-building events run from time to time by the Resident Assistant team; and
- interact with students from their designated wings and on two occasions each semester, coordinate suitable activities to encourage students to get to know each other and to communicate more effectively on issues relating to living in College.

Academic

The provision of academic assistance to students is a major duty of the Resident Assistant. A vital part of the Resident Assistant's role is to assist in the orientation of students to tertiary study. It is expected that the Resident Assistant would get together individuals or groups in her faculty area and discuss study and research skills - for example, help to organise weekly/semester timetables and study plans.

The Resident Assistant will be required to:

- be approachable for individual consultation on problems related to a student's study at a time that is mutually acceptable to both students and Resident Assistant. We encourage the Resident Assistants to be willing to help and to find time to provide academic support and leadership. It is also important that Resident Assistants are proactive in identifying students who are experiencing academic problems;
- assist students with examination preparation, and, to some extent, help students cope with stress, anxiety and time management skills; and
- assist with academic assistance or university orientation in individual consultation. This may mean helping a student find and initiate contact with an Academic Adviser or identifying students with academic problems and encouraging and assisting them in seeking further support, both inside and outside of College. If additional tutoring is required any formal tutorials given above this carry a \$58 per hour payment. This must be approved in advance by the Senior Resident Assistant before payment will be guaranteed.

It is paramount that Resident Assistants maintain exemplary grades in their own studies during their time as a Resident Assistant. In addition, we expect that Resident Assistants will be able to give academic support in the area of their specialisation to at least second year level, and to first year level in associated areas. For example, a Resident Assistant with a degree in science specialising in mathematics will be required to be competent to assist both first and second years in mathematics, but may also be asked to lend a hand to first years in the area of their minor studies.

Roster Duties

Roster duties are a significant aspect of the job. The roster will be published in the first week and there will be opportunities for Resident Assistants to negotiate "duty swaps". The roster duties will include an evening duty from 5pm to 8am the following day on a rotating basis. During your duty you will be asked to be "on call" on the Resident Assistants' mobile phone, remain in College and conduct security checks at 5.00pm and 9.00pm. It is expected that you will be visible during the evening and attend dinner in the dining room. You may be asked to:

- open students' room doors;
- provide emergency care; such as minor first aid, some TLC or recommending that the student consult a doctor
- contact the emergency services such as University Security, the fire brigade or an ambulance; and
- lock up as required.

This roster also includes the weekend period which involves being on duty from 8.00am until 5.00pm of one weekend day. The roster is prepared by the Senior Resident Assistant and will be a rotating roster so that each Resident Assistant will have roster duties on week nights as well as weekends during the year. Details will be discussed with the Resident Assistants by the Senior Resident Assistant before the roster is prepared.

The beginning and the end of each semester are the busiest in College life. You may be requested to assist in welcoming new students outside of your "roster" duty times. This is part of living in College and Resident Assistants are expected to accept such responsibility as part of their role. The Senior Resident Assistant, the Vice Principal and the Principal respect that you have your own life outside of College but require some flexibility at these busy times.

Occasional Duties

Being a Resident Assistant will involve a certain amount of un-roster duties that are somewhat miscellaneous in nature such as enforcing rules about smoking, noise, music, bathrooms, kitchens and guests. Such tasks are difficult to predict but require instant responses so that the Resident Assistant team is recognised as an integrated and supportive group. It is

really important that we are consistent in our responses to such situations and take the initiative to act appropriately or manage a potential situation, even when 'off-duty'.

Resident Assistants are also involved in the after hours care of the College and in distributing information on occasions relevant to the academic, pastoral or administrative concerns of our students. This will involve:

- encouraging students to complete College surveys or other administrative forms.
- keeping a notice board in their wing up to date with necessary information.
- liaising with House Committee members in their wing– ensuring that the student representative is supported and also keeping abreast of their activities.

SENIOR RESIDENT ASSISTANT

The Resident Assistants have a close working relationship with the Senior Resident Assistant. Apart from the fortnightly meetings, Resident Assistants are required to maintain a high level of day to day contact with the Senior Resident Assistant. They should inform her of their concerns for their wing and of their successes. This information sharing is not necessarily restricted to the formal meeting periods.

To enable the formation of a strong sense of team amongst the Resident Assistants, there is a compulsory orientation period at the beginning of the year. A further compulsory training and evaluation day will be held at the beginning of second semester.

CONCLUSION

The Women's College aims to provide an environment that allows a Resident Assistant to show initiative and to be involved in the life of The Women's College in ways that will make the position as challenging and fruitful as possible. The essence of the role requires people to involve themselves in the position creatively, enthusiastically and positively.

Should you be selected as a Resident Assistant at this College, you will be guaranteed to have to deal with many challenges as students establish themselves as independent young adults. Your role will be critical in helping them achieve success. Your rewards will be intrinsic and you will enjoy great life experiences.