

RA To-Do List

- Fill out Room Condition Reports (RCRs) for each resident (it is easiest to do identical RCR forms for each room, with details of all items so residents can take either RCR when they arrive—after residents “pick sides” of the room, this can be specified on the RCR—which desk each person is using, for example). Leave RCRs in the room, but explain at the check-in table what residents need to do when they get to their room. Post signs for when you will collect RCRs (within a few days). Also, do a Common Area Report (CAR) for your area.
- Make nametags/door decorations for each resident in your area.
- Create a bulletin board for your area with information that residents need to know about your hall/cottage/apartment complex, campus information, resident spotlight (fun, general information about residents), etc.
- Help create the hall welcome sign/banner.
- Distribute any information that needs to be left in rooms (may be phone books, Campus Safety brochures, etc.). Orientation staff will also bring welcome bags for each first year student for the RA staff to distribute to resident rooms before they arrive.
- Put up signs for your first floor/wing/cluster meeting with first year students and signs for the first all-hall/cottage/apartment meeting (and locations).
- Put up signs for common policies.
- Work with RA staff to create a skit for your all-hall meeting to talk about your building, policies, etc. (this is optional).
- Submit any maintenance requests for repairs—please group them by type.
- Close and lock all room doors (allows residents to check keys when they arrive).



How to do an RCR/CAR

1. Go through the room using one RCR—you will be checking everything in the room on this one RCR and then duplicating all the information on the other RCR(s). When you finish a room, you will have 2 or 3 identical RCRs. Each resident of the room will have one RCR.
2. Note any scratches, worn spots, stains, paint chips, holes, etc. on each item on the RCR so that the resident does not get charged for these things when he or she checks out.

3. Examples:

<u>Items</u>	<u>Condition Code</u>	<u>Condition Notes</u>
Bed Frame	G	Few scratches on the bottom bunk posts
Dresser	NR	Top dresser drawer off-track
Lounge Chair	—	
Mattress	G	Small tear in top mattress
Walls	G	Two hooks, west wall near door, paint chips near left side of window frame

4. Please take the time to be detailed with your RCRs:
 - Check lights to make sure they work
 - Lift up mattress to check bottom side
 - Open drawers to check inside
5. If you notice something that needs repair, make a note of it. Submit the work order to the appropriate department (Physical Plant, CIT, Locksmith) ASAP. When you submit work orders, please group by type, not by room.
6. Sign on the top line (Residential Life Staff Member) and date it.
7. Copy the first RCR to the second/third RCR (if a double/triple room).
8. Leave the RCRs in rooms on desks and lock the door (if in a hall).
9. You also need to do a Common Area Report (CAR) for all common areas.



Topics for RA at first meeting

Your needs may differ from building to building. You may decide to cover some of this information in your all-hall meeting or first meeting with first year students.

- **INTRODUCTIONS**
Introduce yourself and explain the objective of the meeting.
Tell residents who other staff in building are and what they do.
Explain who the RD is, where his/her office is.
- **ICEBREAKER**
Introduce residents to each other: hometown, major, activities plan to be involved in, etc.
- **ROLES OF THE RA**
Explain roles/responsibilities—support residents (primary role), mediator, educator, resource person, planner of programs/activities.
- **EXPLAIN THE FACILITY**
Mailboxes
Laundry—card system, get cards from machine near SAC office
Lounge
Kitchen
Storage
Parking
Bathrooms
Security—door propping is a safety hazard, locks
Maintenance problems—report to you, the RA
- **POLICIES**
Alcohol/drugs
Visitation Hours
Cannot remove furniture from room
Noise/quiet hours
Screens
Pets (fish only)
Lofts
Emergency procedures/fire alarms
Sports in the hall
Candles
Room switches—only after the first 2 weeks of school; talk to RA first, then RD
Sexual harassment
- **COMMUNITY**
Discuss community agreement—purpose, expectations, accountability
What they can expect from you—duty, rounds, where they can find you, etc.
- **PROGRAMMING**
Give them a survey, ask them to complete it and return it to you
Let them know that programming is a group effort, ask them to help you, get feedback
- **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS**



Community Agreements

Definition and Philosophy:

Community agreements are made by the individual unit and are facilitated by the RA. It attempts to assess how incoming residents feel about a number of "gray area" issues like noise levels, upkeep of the facility, how to monitor visitors on the unit, etc. This process is an attempt to start positive discussion about group issues that affect all residents rather than leaving community development to chance. The objective is to have communities form through communication, compromise, and commitment, rather than as a reaction to problems that occur in the future.

Throughout the year, the agreement will transform and evolve to compensate for natural changes that take place in the residents. The residents should view the agreement as a method of developing a community, as well as initiating relations with other members of this community. With the creation of the agreement, the concept of authority shifts from the RA to the residents. This agreement will empower residents to take full responsibility for their community by developing an atmosphere of respect.

Purpose and Procedures:

These forms serve as a structuring device for facilitating and negotiating discussion about the unit standards. If students are to live together in reasonable harmony, they must have the opportunity to express their expectations of how they want to be affected by others. From an awareness of each other's expectations, the residents can discuss differences and come to agreement on ways that they can incorporate these differences into successful compromise where cooperation yields contentment.

Often residents believe that everyone thinks alike, has the same needs and values, and will act the same in a campus living environment. Thus, they don't understand or appreciate why a unit agreement is vital. The RA must help the residents to see the implications of a community with no standards or no assumed standards. The RA must also help the residents to understand his or her role and the role that the residents will assume as members of the community. Residents need to be held accountable for their experiences and actions that involve others around them. It is also important to stress that each resident needs to accept responsibility for participating and contributing to the standards he or she will be expected to observe. The discussion with residents concerning the purpose and need for a unit agreement is an important avenue to open conversation about the reality of community living. This discussion begins the process of residents engaging other residents in relationship-building conversation.

Benefits to RAs:

The community survey provides initial information to the RA about the needs and expectations of each resident. The RA should see the community agreement as a resource to help address possible conflicts before they arise, as well as a foundation for future discussions should conflicts develop. This process is also an important way to convey to the residents that the role of the RA is not to "control" the community, or to be everyone's "go to" person.



Facilitating Community Agreements

- A. **Introduction** to explain the purpose of the meeting (to establish a community agreement)
- Community refers to an interdependent group of individuals who accept responsibility for their own actions, process concerns, respect each other, support each other, and apply college policies to their interactions.
- B. **Facilitate discussion** as to why a Community Agreement is needed:
- Individually to accept responsibility
 - One on one to process concerns
 - Within the unit to develop community as defined above
 - Within residence life to relate college policy to community
- C. **Establish norms** for discussion:
- Invite everyone to share ideas
 - One person speaks at a time
 - Comments should be kept positive and productive
 - Criticize ideas NOT people
- D. **Process** ideas:
- Identify major issues
 - attain consensus—everyone agreeing without voting
 - If consensus is not possible, try to reword and continue the discussion.
 - If that fails, vote as a last resort.
 - Record agreement—distribute a typed copy to residents and post on bulletin boards
- E. **Accountability**:
- Residents' role related to policy:
 - Individual or group activities that result in distress or disturbance to others or that cause damage or destruction to property are prohibited
 - Actions that infringe generally upon the rights and freedoms of others students cannot be condoned in the residence halls regardless of the intention behind the actions
 - RA's role:
 - The RA should serve as a facilitator/resource if residents have tried to express a concern to a co-resident unsuccessfully
 - Residents should understand that the RA will help, but not necessarily solve problems
- F. **Re-assess** periodically:
- As conflicts arise, the floor/unit agreement will be used as a means to see if the agreement is still meeting the needs of residents
 - Minimally at the beginning of spring semester

Discuss what the community feels is appropriate for the following issues:

- Noise Levels
- Security Issues
- Policy Violations
- Damages
- Community Relationships
- Other Issues
- Enforcement



Community Agreements in Cottages/Apartments

Because of the smaller number of residents and the set-up of the living space in cottages/apartments, there are some additional items that should be discussed specific to each community.

Sleeping Environment

How much sleep do we need on a nightly basis? How do we feel about noise, lights, etc. in our bedrooms while sleeping? How do we feel about noise in the living room, kitchen, etc. while sleeping? Other thoughts?

Studying Environment

When do we like to study? What are noise tolerances when studying? Which room(s) will be study areas? Other thoughts?

Cleaning, Cleanliness, Use of Space

How often will rooms be cleaned (living room, kitchen, bathroom(s), bedrooms, etc.)? Who will do what to clean? What are our expectations with general cleanliness of the rooms and personal belongings (messy, casual, spotless, etc.)? How often will we remove trash? How do we divide storage space in the kitchen, bathroom(s), basement, etc.? How will we wash dishes? (Please keep the Cottage Cleanliness Standards in mind when completing this section). Other thoughts?

Use of Personal Items/Security

What items can be shared with/without permission? What items may not be used by housemates? What will we do with items purchased together for the unit? What is our stance on others' access to our bedrooms and items? What is our stance on keeping doors or windows open/closed/locked during the day/night? Other thoughts?

Guests and Visitation Hours

How often can guests come over/be in the unit? When are good/bad times for guests? Does there need to be advance warning or discussion before guests visit? What are expectations about guests of the opposite gender (please note that College policy is that guests of the opposite sex are allowed between 10 am and 12 am on weeknights and 10 am and 2 am on weekends). Other thoughts?

Communication

How do we agree to communicate with each other when there is a problem or concern? What do we feel comfortable talking about or not talking about? If someone calls or stops by, how will we take messages? Other thoughts?



Facilitating Roommate Agreements

Like community agreements, roommate agreements are to start discussion and explain expectations of both/all the residents in a room. This is to be used as agreed upon standards in case conflict arises later in the year.

In many situations it will be necessary for the RA to be highly involved in facilitating roommate negotiations. In other situations questions such as "How did your discussion go?" "Are you anticipating any conflicts?" or "What agreements did you make?" are sufficient to start a dialogue about the process. Whichever approach the RA uses depends on his or her style and the personalities of the roommates involved.

- A. **Explain the purpose** and function of the roommate agreements is to:
 - State needs and desires of each other prior to point of conflict
 - Create mutually agreed to standards for room environment
- B. **Explain your expectations** for their participation in this task:
 - Respect each others needs
 - Discuss issues and feelings openly
 - Expect some areas of disagreement and be prepared to compromise in those
 - Say what is meant, and mean what is said
 - Be positive about making the situation work
 - Be committed to further communication
- C. **Discuss and negotiate:**
 - Issues that are addressed on the agreement
 - Areas of difference
 - Potential conflicts by searching for details
- D. **Record** what is agreed upon:
 - Encourage them to be very specific—the more details they outline the more useful this tool will be to you and them
 - Explain to them that it is their agreement and that they will keep a copy in the room
 - Encourage them to write it—it helps in achieving a sense of ownership
- E. **Discuss accountability**, which includes:
 - Their commitment to making the agreement work
 - What to do when the agreement has been violated or needs to be changed
 - your role as a resource
- F. **Discuss re-assessment:**
 - It will occur at their request throughout the year
 - It will occur at your request as problems arise



Items for discussion

Communication

How do we agree to communicate with each other when there is a problem or concern in the room? What do we feel comfortable talking about or not talking about? If someone calls or stops by, how will we take messages? How late or early is appropriate for others to call our room? Any other thoughts?

Sleeping Environment

How much sleep do we need on a nightly basis? What are our class schedules? When do we think we will get up/go to bed? How do we think our schedules will affect our sleep habits? How do we feel about noise, lights, typing, etc, while sleeping? Any other thoughts?

Studying Environment

What are our schedules like? What are noise tolerances when studying? How much do we anticipate studying in the room? Any other thoughts?

Cleaning, Cleanliness, and Use of Space

How often and how thoroughly will we clean the room? Who will do what to clean? What are our expectations with general cleanliness of the room and personal belongings (messy, casual, spotless, etc)? How often will we remove trash? How do we divide the storage space or floor space? Any other thoughts?

Use of Personal Items/Security

What items can be shared with/without permission? What items may not be used by the roommate(s)? What will we do with items bought together for the room? What is our stance on other's access to our room and items? Do we agree/disagree about locking our doors during the day/night? Please note: the College STRONGLY encourages all residents to lock room doors when not in the room during the day/evening or when in the room sleeping at night – please carry your room key when you are out of the room! Communication between roommates can prevent lockouts from occurring (e.g. if you or your roommate is showering, what do you agree to do – leave the room unlocked, or carry keys to bathroom, etc?) Any other thoughts?

Guests and Visitation Hours

How often can guests come over/be in the room? When are good/bad times for guests? Does it need to be advance warning or discussion? What are expectations about guests of the opposite gender? Please note Hope College policy is that the opposite sex is allowed between 10am-12am on weeknights, and 10am-2am on weekends. Any other thoughts?



Housing Change Process

1. Student goes to their RA or RD to request a new housing assignment.
2. The RA should assess the situation and determine if they should mediate or involve the RLC/RD/NC to mediate. The RLC/RD/NC should always inform his or her supervisor of these situations.
3. After an attempt to mediate has been done and all avenues resolved, the RLC/RD may begin the process to approve a housing change by completing a Housing Change Form.
4. Once housing change has been approved, the student will bring the signed form to the Housing Office to receive a new housing assignment and move date. Twenty-four hours will be given for a move to occur. RLC/RD/NCs will be made aware of approved moves via email.
5. All students must check out of their current location and check in to their new location.
6. Students will have a housing change form to turn in to their new RLC/RD/NC. Please sign this form and return to the Housing Office.



Door Alarms

If a door alarm is going off in your building, and the door does not have something blocking it from closing completely or is not propped, do the following things:

1. Find another person to direct people to another door. The door must remain closed in order for Campus Safety to silence the alarm.
2. Call Campus Safety (x7770) and tell them which door alarm is going off and that someone is keeping the door closed.

