

The Taylor Institute (TI) Research Associate (RA) Program provides an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students employed at the TI to gain professional work experience, to build upon their academic studies, and to contribute to the development, evaluation, and enhancement of the TI's programs and activities. As affirmed in our "Principles of Good Practice in Collaboration and Knowledge-Sharing," we encourage faculty and staff to "invite students *as partners* in their efforts to better understand and improve student learning and effective teaching," a principle we enact in the Research Associate Program by ensuring that the RAs gain authentic experiences that contribute to their professional development. In the RA Program application, question 7 speaks to this commitment: "*What specific knowledge, skills, or abilities will the Research Associate gain through this experience? How will this work contribute to the Research Associate's ongoing academic and professional development?*"

Identifying the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of RA Development

RA development refers to the *professional competency*—knowledge, skills, or abilities that are transferable across academic and workplace contexts—that RAs will bring to *and gain from* their role.

Knowledge refers to a RA's theoretical and practical understanding of theories, facts, methods, procedures, and the ability to apply information to different situations critically and creatively (Co-operative Education Program and Career Services: 2011). Both academic and workplace knowledge can be developed through coursework, workshops, research, conferences, training, and experience. When considering knowledge that an RA will bring to and gain from their role, reflect on:

1. **Academic knowledge:** Discipline or topic-specific scholarship or proficiencies relevant to your project (e.g., a working understanding of educational technology, how libraries work, curriculum development and review, or the fundamentals of scholarship of teaching and learning [SoTL]).
2. **Workplace knowledge:** Professional experience, or field/job-specific training and certification relevant to your project (e.g., a working understanding of education contexts, learning communities, technology, and educational processes).

Skills and *abilities* refer to an RA's capacity to choose and perform the appropriate techniques, methods, and strategies for a given task (Co-operative Education Program and Career Services: 2011). Such skills and abilities are developed through experiences that put knowledge and skills into practice, such as coursework, research projects, training, experience, assessment, and independent and team-based work (Rose, 2012: 17-18). The Canadian Association for Graduate Students (CAGS) captures four kinds of professional skills applicable to RA development (2008: 6-7):

1. **Communication skills:** Collecting, synthesizing, and reporting information in a variety of situations and to a variety of audiences (e.g., oral presentations at meetings/seminars/conferences, developing web content, and writing literature reviews and proposals).
2. **Management skills:** Understanding how to manage people and resources successfully in different settings (e.g., setting goals/milestones/priorities in relation to the project focus, selecting and using appropriate qualitative/quantitative methods for research or evaluation, or practicing critical reflection).
3. **Teaching and knowledge-transfer skills:** Explaining concepts, selecting content, and using delivery models in various contexts and to various audiences (e.g., preparing instruction manuals, research reports, literature reviews, syntheses and summaries of research).
4. **Ethics:** Making sound judgements based on an accurate grasp of basic ethical principles related to authorship, conflict of interest, intellectual property, and social, institutional, and environmental considerations (e.g., making appropriate judgment calls, maintaining confidentiality with sensitive information).

Bibliography

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