

First-Year Composition Administrator Handbook

This handbook is intended to give new First-Year Composition Administrators (FYC Admins) an overview of the position and to lay out some of the most important aspects of the appointment. This guide isn't meant to be a "how to" guide, per se, but is instead a guide to help you understand the scope of your duties based on fall/spring/summer semesters and to understand some of the procedures we've developed for mentoring GTAs. This handbook will also serve as documentation of the range of responsibilities and skills you developed and demonstrated in the FYC Admin position, which will in turn assist your development of key points to integrate into your resume/CV.

This guide is generally organized by semester, since your role as an FYC Admin changes somewhat depending on what semester it is. You can read the guide through from beginning to end or use the links in the Table of Contents to jump to each section. (To jump to a particular section, hover the mouse over a subheading and hit ctrl+click to jump to that area.)

Before beginning, though, I hope you'll take a moment to consider the importance of your position. As an FYC Admin you'll be helping run a rigorous and well-respected GTA training program. Quite frequently GTAs at other institutions receive little more than a brief orientation, a textbook, and list of course objectives or a catalog description of the class they're going to teach. Our GTAs, on the other hand, receive true mentoring that helps them grow as instructors, learn from feedback, and have a safety net that ensures they – and their students – are supported throughout the entire process. Your job is important and the fact that your application was chosen should assure you that you're the right person to help guide our GTAs through their growth as teachers.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Glossary

- **FYC:** First-Year Composition
- **FYC Admin:** First-Year Composition Administrator
- **FYC Program:** First-Year Composition Program
- **GTA:** Graduate Teaching Assistant

Job Description

The following job description was taken from the position announcement that was advertised through the English Department and CSU Human Resources.

- *Composition Program Administration positions are full time (4/4 load) with course releases appropriate to each position.*
- *Successful applicants will be expected to meet departmental objectives for the courses they teach.*
- **First-Year Composition Program Administration:** *One course release per semester for administrative work, including training and supervision of graduate teaching assistants in CO150, College Composition (co-coordinating intensive, week-long orientation program before fall semester; holding weekly in-service workshops; observing classes of and holding conferences about grading with new GTAs; maintaining records about and evaluating GTA teaching performance) and collaborating to update/revise common CO150 syllabus and course materials. Instructors might teach CO130 (Academic Writing), CO150 (College Composition), CO300 (Writing Arguments), CO301 (Writing in the Disciplines) or CO302 (Writing Online). The availability of other courses is based on department need and the instructor's background.*

GTA Demographics and Selection Process

Our GTAs are a diverse group. They may be first-year graduate students (new to CSU) or they may be second- or third-year graduate students who have been taking classes in the English department for a year or more. Some are students entering CSU immediately after finishing their bachelor's degrees, some have been in the working world after finishing their undergraduate degrees, some may have other graduate degrees under their belt, and some may have taught in formal settings before (e.g., at middle schools or high schools, in schools abroad, as GTAs at other institutions, etc.). While many were English majors as undergraduates, we've had GTAs with degrees in geology, philosophy, anthropology, physics, and numerous other disciplines.

Potential GTAs must apply for the position in order to be considered. The selection process involves two phases. In the first phase, faculty from each program (Creative Writing [Fiction and Poetry], Creative Non-Fiction, English Education, Literature, Rhetoric and Composition, TESL/TEFL) review the GTA applicants from their specific program. Each program chooses their top applicants for the GTA position and puts those names forward to the Teaching Committee. Those files chosen by each program are then holistically read and ranked by the

Teaching Committee, which agrees upon a consensus ranking and offers GTA positions based on that ranking and the number of available GTA positions that year. When deciding on the consensus ranking, the committee also considers program balance (i.e., ensuring that a variety of different programs are represented within the incoming GTA class.) The Teaching Committee is made up of members from each program as well as the Director of Composition, an FYC Administrator, and the Graduate Coordinator.

FALL SEMESTER

GTA Training

Among your first duties as an FYC Admin is taking a lead role in GTA training. GTA training is an intensive, week-long training of new Graduate Teaching Assistants that takes place the week prior to the Fall semester. It lasts from 9-4 each day, with an hour-long lunch break.

There are several goals for GTA training. The most manifest goal of GTA training is to introduce the new GTAs to important elements of CSU's Composition Program and, quite simply, teach new teachers how to teach our curriculum. Below is an abbreviated list of some of the many items covered during GTA training:

- Composition program philosophy
- Composition placement procedures
- The rhetorical situation and rhetorical terminology
- Writing as a process
- Feedback and grading practices
- Classroom management strategies
- Plagiarism in the composition classroom
- Recordkeeping
- Using an online course management tool
- Overview of the major projects, with special emphasis on the first and second projects students will complete

In addition to teaching GTAs about vital aspects of composition pedagogy, the training week also simultaneously achieves more subtle goals:

- It is an opportunity for the GTAs to get to know one another and to interact with the composition faculty so they can build camaraderie and understand the faculty members who are the “safety net” they can reach out to during their time as GTAs.
- It serves as an opportunity for GTAs to see many different styles of teaching and modes of instruction. Because the Director of Composition, the FYC Admins, and other Composition faculty all teach lessons throughout the week, GTAs are exposed to many different strategies and styles they might employ in their own classrooms.

Several weeks prior to GTA training, the Director of Composition will generally hold a meeting with the Composition faculty to determine workload breakdown for the week (i.e., what faculty members will teach which lessons during the training week.) You may be asked to develop and teach some lessons for GTA training on your own, and for others you will likely collaborate with one or two other people to develop the lesson.

Teaching an Audit Section of CO150

During Fall semester you will teach a section of CO150 known as your “audit section.” This section of CO150 is capped at its normal capacity (24 students), but you will also have a handful of GTAs (often 4-5, but the number can vary) who will attend your class each day for a large portion of the semester. The Director of Composition determines how many weeks the GTAs will attend their audit sections, though generally they attend for the first 10-12 weeks of the semester. It is mandatory that GTAs attend their audit section of CO150 during the period designated by the Director of Composition.

The goal of the audit section is to give GTAs the opportunity to see each lesson in the common syllabus taught prior to teaching it themselves. For instance, as the audit instructor on a MWF schedule, you may teach a lesson about quoting and paraphrasing on a Wednesday and your GTAs would teach the same lesson on Friday, meaning that as the audit instructor you’re one day ahead of your GTAs. This is the ideal, though this is very difficult for those teaching on a TR schedule. If you teach a TR schedule, talk with one of the more experienced FYC Admins about how to handle this; many of them work to get at least a ½ day ahead of their GTAs, especially when it comes to introducing new concepts.

GTAs frequently note that the audit section is invaluable for their development as teachers, especially since so many GTAs have never taught before (and also since many of them never actually took the equivalent to CO150 at their own undergraduate institutions). Audit has many benefits:

- First, it provides the GTAs more familiarity with the content of CO150 and introduces them to strategies to turn the lessons in the common syllabus into lessons for a living, breathing audience of CO150 students.
- Additionally, seeing you teach a lesson provides the GTAs with strategies for talking about rhetorical concepts and writing strategies, responding to student questions about the material, scaffolding lessons, providing links to previous classes and overarching course goals (and hence describing the all-important “arc” of the course or the relationship of the parts to the whole), etc.
- On a more general level, sitting in on your class for such a large portion of the semester also lets the GTAs see how you manage your classroom, give feedback to students about their work in class, lead discussions, manage the logistics of group work, use technology in the classroom, etc.

Quite frequently the FYC Admins will share their lesson plans and related materials (PowerPoints, Prezis, worksheets, etc.) with the members of their audit sections (and sometimes to the larger group of GTAs – even those not in their audit section). Since these items may be your intellectual property, sharing these items with the GTAs is voluntary.

Pedagogy Group

In Fall semester, you will also lead a Pedagogy Group with the members of your audit section. Pedagogy Group generally meets every other Wednesday (starting with the first week of the

semester) during the lunch hour (12-1pm) since this is a time specifically designated for GTA professional development. You can meet with your pedagogy group at a place of your choosing. Some FYC Admins meet GTAs in the Lory Student Center, some will meet in the coffee shop of the Behavioral Sciences Building, some will get cozy in an office, etc.

The content of Pedagogy Group is also largely up to you, but the focus is, as the name implies, teaching. Many FYC Admins include the following items in their Pedagogy Group:

- *An informal check-in*, talking with the GTAs as a group about how their classes are going, what issues they may want help with, etc.
- *The audit section*, potentially answering their questions about your teaching strategies, talking about what they saw in audit, how they adapted it to their own classes, how well it worked, etc.
- *Upcoming obligations* on their part or items in the syllabus (e.g., you may discuss the process for Grading Conferences [[click here](#) for more info on that], explain the process of entering final grades at the end of the semester, the ins and outs of Project 3 in the syllabus, etc.)

Observation of GTAs

You will be assigned a handful of first- and second-year GTAs to observe during Fall semester. Observation assignments (i.e., whom you'll observe) are generally based on teaching schedules (meaning you'll observe people who teach at times you do not teach). Each first-year GTA is observed twice during fall semester, more if the GTA requests more observations or if the GTA has challenges that require more intervention and mentoring.

Generally, the first observation is completed relatively early in the semester (usually by the 3rd or 4th week, depending on scheduling) so that you, the Director of Composition, and the other FYC Admins can provide early intervention if a GTA is having difficulties. The second observation generally happens after the halfway point of the semester (i.e., after week 8) so that you can get a sense of the GTA's growth over the course of the semester.

You will also observe several second-year GTAs during Fall semester. Second-years are only observed once in Fall semester, unless they request more observations or are having difficulties/challenges in the classroom. If second-years inquire about Spring observations, [click here](#) for information about how Spring observations work.

Here is the overarching procedure for observations:

- Work with the GTA to set up an observation day that works with both your schedules. Do note that some class sessions, such as peer review workshops, tend to be poor days for observations since the GTA teaches relatively little during those class periods; consider that when contacting your GTAs to set up an observation.
- Prior to the observation, you'll want to have the GTA email you a copy of the day's lesson plan. Review this prior to class to get a sense of the day's goals and activities.

You may need to refer back to it when providing feedback about the class session. You'll also want the GTA to answer a set of pre-observation questions that help contextualize the class period. You can find the pre-observation questions in the Writing Studio "Clearinghouse" page that the FYC Admins use to store and share documents; talk with one of the current FYC Admins to make sure you're added as an instructor to this page and can access all the documents there.

- The GTA may wish for you to review online materials they have posted for students to review or participate in. If this is the case, remember to ask for access to their course page.
- After each observation you will do the following:
 - *Meet with the GTA to discuss the class session.* These post-observation conferences are valuable learning tools that give the GTA the opportunity to talk about what they found successful about the class session, what might need revised in the future when teaching that lesson again, etc. It is during the conference that you have the opportunity to provide verbal, formative feedback to the GTA about his/her teaching, as well as to chat with the GTA more generally about how class is going, what s/he finds challenging about being a GTA, clarifying the assignment or course goals, etc.
 - *Complete an observation report.* You can find the blank observation report in the Writing Studio "Clearinghouse" page, as well as an archive of previously-completed reports you can use as examples. Generally speaking, the report asks you to provide feedback about the content of the lesson, instructional methods, instructor-student interactions, your overall impressions of the GTA's strengths and opportunities for improvement, and goals the GTA has for his/her teaching. Upon completing the report, upload the completed report to the appropriate area in the Writing Studio "Clearinghouse." You should also email a copy to the GTA, the Director of Composition, and the Composition Program Assistant (Sue Russell), who will place a hard copy of the report in the GTA's file.

Grading Conferences

Because providing feedback and evaluating student writing are valuable forms of teaching (what we call "teaching in the margins")* during Fall semester you will also complete two grading conferences with your GTAs so you can provide them with support and guidance with regards to their feedback and grading practices. Usually the same GTAs you observe will be those you meet with for grading conferences.

* The CSU Composition Program's focus on "teaching in the margins" is due in large part to Emeritus faculty member Kate Kiefer and her invaluable online tutorial, which can be viewed by Googling "teaching in the margins" on Writing@CSU.

During these grading conferences you will examine the GTA's marginal and end comments on three student papers, as well as the grade s/he has assigned to each paper, to ensure the GTA's feedback and grading are in line with department standards.

In general, you are examining GTA grading and feedback for evidence of consistency, forward-looking helpfulness, and sound critique. Grades should be reasonable and appropriate for the level of the students; bear in mind that they will need help with calibrating their grading as their tendency may be to grade too hard or too easy. They are often both alarmed by weak student writing and also unsure of their own authority as graders. Feedback is where they can focus their efforts and see themselves as coaches rather than judge and jury. They should provide a meaningful end comment that is clearly connected to marginal comments that offer evidence and location of the criticisms and enthusiasms noted in the end comment. They should provide praise where warranted though they often think their role is purely critical. When talking to GTAs about their feedback, consider reminding them that feedback should reflect its own rhetorical situation. That is, feedback itself is writing with both a purpose and an audience. They might ask themselves: How can I best reach this student and influence her writing and her willingness to engage further with effort in her writing? GTAs can demonstrate their own mastery of rhetorical skills through their demonstration of good feedback.

Grading conferences usually happen with the first major writing project (often week 4 or 5) and the third major writing project (around week 13). As with the observations, the conferences are spread out so you can get a sense of the GTA's growth over the course of the semester.

The process for grading conferences requires a bit of planning, since you will need to have read and reviewed the student papers and the GTA's comments on the papers prior to meeting with the GTA to discuss them. The process is generally this:

- The GTA will collect student papers from his/her class and select three papers (one A-level, one B-level, and one below B-level) for the grading review.
- If the GTA does *electronic grading* (using Microsoft Word, for instance), then the GTA can make marginal and end comments on the file, decide on a grade, and email the document to you.
- If the GTA *grades by hand*, then the process is slightly different. Before marking on the original student drafts, the GTA should make a Xerox copy of each essay. The GTA should then make his/her comments on the COPY of the student paper, leaving the original clean and unmarked. The GTA will then need to physically pass the papers to you prior to the conference.
 - NOTE: The procedure described above for the grading conferences is so that the GTA can go back and amend comments after you've met with him/her for the grading conference, in the event that the comments are inappropriate, unclear, too vague, etc. GTAs needing to revise their comments after meeting with their Comp Admin is quite common. Since grading is teaching, it often takes quite a lot of practice for GTAs to learn strategies for commenting on student papers so that the comments are formative rather than merely summative. When doing

electronic grading, this is rather simple since the GTA can simply return to the document and make necessary changes to the comments/grade before giving it to the student. When doing hard-copy grading, though, it is very difficult to revise comments if they're written directly on the original copy of the student paper (hence the need for making Xerox copies of them before putting their comments on them.)

- It is important that you read and review the GTA's comments prior to meeting with him/her for the conference so that you have time to read the student paper yourself, make note of the most pressing issues that need to be addressed in the comments, analyze the GTA's comments to see if s/he is addressing those major issues, ensure the GTA is keeping a hierarchy of rhetorical concerns in mind while offering commentary on the student paper, and ensure the grade assigned is within department standards.
- During the grading conference you can provide verbal feedback about the GTA's feedback and grading practices. As with the post-observation conferences, this conversation also acts as an opportunity for the GTA to ask questions, express concerns, get advice about grading or other classroom issues, etc.
- After the second grading conference you will write a Grading Conference Report that notes the GTA's progress in feedback and grading over the course of the semester. You can find a blank copy of the grading conference report on the Writing Studio "Clearinghouse" page, as well as see previously-completed reports to use as examples. Upon completing the report, upload the completed report to the appropriate area in the Writing Studio "Clearinghouse." You should also email a copy to the GTA, the Director of Composition, and the Composition Program Assistant (Sue Russell), who will place a hard copy of the report in the GTA's file.
 - NOTE: Although you do two grading conferences during the Fall semester, you only need to do one Grading Conference Report (after the second conference.) This means you should take careful notes at the first grading conference and keep them in a safe place for reference later in the semester when writing the report so you can note the growth and change over the semester.

PIE (Professional Internship in English) Seminars

PIE seminars happen with second-year GTAs every other Wednesday from 12-1pm during Fall semester (i.e., the weeks you are not doing Pedagogy Group with first-year GTAs). The goal of these seminars is to continue the professional development of second-year GTAs based on topics they're interested in learning more about. Because the GTAs themselves help determine the topics, they can vary from year to year. Some popular pedagogical issues that second-year GTAs have chosen are classroom management, increasing student engagement, grading, teaching with technology, etc.

The Director of Composition and the FYC Admins will work together to determine the workload breakdown of the Fall PIE sessions (i.e., who is responsible for which topics, etc.)

FYC Committee

As an FYC Admin, you're automatically a member of the FYC Committee. As the name implies, the FYC Committee tackles issues related to CSU's FYC Program. These meetings also provide the opportunity for the FYC Admins to meet with the Director of Composition and other Composition faculty to talk with them about the GTAs' progress, any concerns/issues that are arising, etc.

Meetings of the FYC Committee are determined by the Director of Composition, usually every other Wednesday from 1-2pm (after Pedagogy Group or PIE).

FYC Colloquia

Twice each semester the Director of Composition, often assisted by the FYC Admins, organizes a professional development Colloquium. The goal of the Colloquia is for the GTAs to hear from guest speakers about issues related to composition, pedagogy, first-year students, etc. Many issues have been covered at FYC Colloquia, including plagiarism, identifying students in distress, retention issues among first-year students, stress management, etc. If you have ideas about topics or speakers, share them with the Director of Composition as the goal for Colloquia is always relevance and timeliness of the presentation.

Colloquia are catered lunches; they generally happen Wednesdays during the lunch hour since no GTAs or FYC Admins teach from 12-1 on Wednesdays. Generally the first colloquium happens relatively early in the semester (usually during the first month) and the second colloquium happens late in the semester (in the last few weeks of the semester.)

First- and second-year GTAs are required to attend the Colloquia; third-year GTAs are encouraged to come but not required to attend. The FYC Admins also attend, as do many members of the Composition faculty.

Intervention for Struggling GTAs

As an FYC Admin you may be called upon to provide extra help to GTAs who are struggling. GTAs can struggle for a number of reasons: sometimes they are uncomfortable speaking in front of students, sometimes they don't understand the course content well (and thus have trouble teaching the content to their students), sometimes they struggle with organizing a class period or sequencing activities, sometimes they have trouble providing quality feedback to students, sometimes they have difficulty with professionalism, etc.

Depending on the nature of the GTA's challenges, your "intervention" might mean many things, including:

- Completing extra observations, post-observation conferences, and observation reports
- Completing extra grading conferences
- Meeting informally with the GTA on a regular basis to check in and follow up

- Reviewing the GTA’s lesson plans to provide guidance on course content
- Meeting with the Director of Composition to determine an appropriate course of action depending on the particular struggles the GTA is facing.

Maintaining Professionalism

As an FYC Admin, you should strive to maintain a degree of professional, ethical distance from GTAs, which means that it is generally better to meet GTAs in a professional setting such as your office rather than over a beer. You are a supervisor of their work, not a peer. You should feel no obligation to “bail them out” when they create a predicament for themselves and should not overstep your professional and ethical boundaries. For instance:

- Don’t teach their classes for them
- Don’t do their grading for them
- Don’t feel obligated to give extensive review of their every step in the process, such as reviewing every paper that they’re having trouble putting a grade on
- Don’t babysit for their children or feel as though you should be their helpful assistant if they need a ride home from a car servicing appointment
- Don’t conduct conferences in a hot tub or anywhere that your intentions could be misunderstood. Remember that the liberties you take with them are likely the same ones they’ll take with their own students.

General Support to GTAs

Part of your duties are also to provide general support to GTAs. The phrase is purposefully vague since the level of support GTAs need varies by the year (and varies among the various GTAs individually). Some GTAs might email you with quick questions, others may drop by your office hours or set up an appointment to get advice about a troublesome student or classroom management situation, some may want to meet for coffee one afternoon to vent their frustrations, etc.

Because this part of the position is vague and changes, do be cautious about letting any single GTA monopolize your time. If you feel the needs of a particular GTA are too much for you to handle individually, reach out to the Director of Composition and other FYC Admins so they can “share the load” a bit. Not only will this help ensure you’re not taking on more than you can/should, it also helps the GTA get a variety of perspectives on whatever challenges they may be facing.

We purposefully provide a large support network for GTAs, so don’t feel as if you’re the only person who can help a GTA who needs assistance.

Spring Semester

The workload in Spring semester changes somewhat. You'll complete fewer observations and grading conferences but do more work with planning for the next school year. One major difference between Fall and Spring semesters is your involvement with second-year GTAs. You will not observe any second-year GTAs, unless they request it or are struggling in the classroom. Generally we encourage 2nd-year GTAs in the spring semester to request that their advisor observe one of their class sessions so that s/he can write the GTA a letter of recommendation, if need be.

Observation of GTAs

As in Fall semester, you will be assigned a handful of first-year GTAs to observe. You will observe each GTA one time, unless the GTA requests more observations or is struggling. To see an overview of the observation procedures, [click here](#).

As an FYC Admin, you will not observe any second-year GTAs in Spring. If they ask about an observations in the spring, tell them that they should arrange with their advisor to do that observation so that documentation of a teaching observation might be added to the advisor's set of recommendation materials for his or her graduate student.

Grading Conferences

Similar to Fall semester, you will also complete grading conferences with your group of first-year GTAs. Generally in Spring semester you only will do one Grading Conference, rather than two (though, as usual, if the GTA needs more intervention or requests more help you may need to complete a second Grading Conference in Spring semester.) To see an overview of Grading Conference procedures, [click here](#).

- Note: Make sure to be aware of an important difference between Fall and Spring semester Grading Conferences. In Fall semester you do two Grading Conferences and write a single report to track the GTA's growth over the course of the semester. In Spring semester, you do one Grading Conference and do a report for that conference only.

PIE (Professional Internship in English) Seminars

PIE seminars also happen in Spring semester every other Wednesday at noon. For more information about PIE seminars, [click here](#).

CO150 Syllabus Redesign Committee

Another aspect of your Spring semester duties is your involvement with the CO150 Syllabus Redesign Committee. Each year during Spring semester the FYC Admins and the Director of Composition begin the long process of revising the CO150 Common Syllabus for the following Fall semester.

The number of revisions varies from year to year, though some changes are inevitable, in part due to problems with plagiarism. Because so many students take CO150 each year and because so many instructors (GTAs and faculty) pull from the CO150 Common Syllabus when teaching their courses, there are very real risks of students plagiarizing their projects since there are so many students who have completed the exact assignments before.

Sometimes the Committee may decide to make only a few small changes to the syllabus for the following Fall (e.g., changing the article choices for a project, changing the calendar a bit to shorten the time allotted for one assignment or lengthen the time allotted for another assignment, etc.)

Sometimes the changes are much larger. The course theme usually changes every 2-3 years (to further prevent plagiarism as well as to keep instructors and students interested in a current topic.) The new course theme sometimes means a new course reader, which may be done in-house by working closely with a publisher or may mean reviewing available course readers and choosing an appropriate text for our program's needs. Even if there isn't a new reader in the works, it's likely that you'll work to find and review articles and work with the Director of Composition and the publisher to get permissions to use those articles in our curriculum.

Other larger changes may be major revisions to the writing projects and/or creation of new projects and assignments. The new assignments necessarily dictate revisions to the lesson plans to ensure that the lessons are preparing students to meet the objectives of that particular assignment.

Syllabus re-design activities begin in Spring semester and continue into Summer semester. Be aware that your duties on the Syllabus Redesign Committee are part of your required duties in Spring semester; in Summer semester, it's considered an additional duty and is compensated separately. Talk to the Director of Composition for more information.

FYC Committee

In Spring semester, too, you'll be a member of the FYC Committee. For more info about the FYC Committee, [click here](#).

FYC Colloquia

The Director of Composition will also plan two Colloquia during Spring semester. For more info about the FYC Colloquia, [click here](#).

Intervention for Struggling GTAs

As always, you may need to assist a struggling GTA in various ways. [Click here](#) for more information.

General Support to GTAs

In Spring semester, too, your role is to provide general support to GTAs ([click here](#) for more about what "general support" entails and [click here](#) for a reminder about professionalism and what intervention does NOT mean.) Though never a guarantee, it's likely that GTAs will need less general support in Spring semester compared with Fall semester since they have a full

semester of teaching under their belts and are generally more comfortable in the classroom by Spring semester.

English Department Teaching Committee (GTA Selection Committee)

Each year, the English Department Teaching Committee (sometimes referred to informally as the GTA Selection Committee) reads and ranks the files of GTAs to determine the top candidates from each program and to decide who should be offered a GTA position. ([Click here](#) for more information about how GTAs are chosen.)

One FYC Admin is a member of this committee and will read and rank the files and take part in the selection process. Because the workload on this committee is quite large, the Director of Composition will work to ensure fairness with regards to which FYC Admin is on this committee.

The FYC Admin who is chosen for this committee will need to spend quite a lot of time in the weeks prior to the committee meeting to read the files of GTA candidates. In general the committee members are reading each file holistically and ranking each file relative to the others to determine the top candidates. Then, at the committee meeting, each committee member will be able to see all other committee members' rankings of each candidate and work to come to an agreement about a final consensus ranking of the candidates.

If you are asked to serve on this committee, it may be a good idea to ask an FYC Admin who has been on this committee before about the experience. S/he may be able to give you tips about what to look for in the files, how to take notes about the files, what to consider when ranking the candidates, etc.

Other duties as required by Director of Composition or the English Department

Because the observation and grading conference schedule is lighter in Spring semester compared with Fall, you may be called upon by the Department or the Director of Composition to take on other Composition-related duties. In the past, for instance, low enrollments in Spring CO150 classes meant that several sections that were to be taught by GTAs were cancelled. Because some GTAs were not teaching, those GTAs did special projects for the Department and had FYC Admins supervising their work. This particular scenario isn't particularly common but has happened a few times.

Summer Semester

Teaching a “Pilot” Section

During the Summer semester at least one (sometimes several) FYC Admins teach a section of CO150 in which they “pilot” the new syllabus. This provides an opportunity to test out any new assignments and revise them (if needed) prior to their being rolled out with the GTAs in the Fall. You will be compensated your regular per-section rate if you teach a pilot section during the Summer semester.

Preparing for new GTAs

As part of your summer duties you may also be asked to prepare for new GTAs; usually this duty falls on those who are teaching the pilot section(s). At the beginning of the summer the Director of Composition or the Composition Program Assistant will email the incoming GTAs and encourage them to access the online course management page for the summer run by the pilot instructor(s). (Do note they are not asked to attend class or required to take part in online activities; they’re encouraged to access the course page online so they can see what kind of materials the pilot instructors post, review forums/discussion boards to get a sense of students’ writing levels, etc.)

Often the pilot instructors will contact the GTAs who are enrolled in the class and invite them to visit the class just to see how a live class session unfolds. This is, of course, entirely optional (especially since many GTAs don’t move to Fort Collins until right before GTA training begins.) But if you have any GTAs take you up on the offer, it becomes a good opportunity to welcome the new GTA to our program and answer questions about the course, the assignments, etc.

CO150 Syllabus Redesign Committee

Your duties on the CO150 Syllabus Redesign Committee extend into the Summer semester, in part because the workload is so great (and couldn’t possibly be finished entirely by the end of the Spring semester) and in part because those teaching the pilot sections of the course will have feedback from their courses about the proposed changes to assignments, etc. Work with the other members of the Syllabus Redesign Committee to determine breakdown of workload and what revisions need to be made prior to GTA training beginning. Be aware that your duties on the Syllabus Redesign Committee are part of your required duties in Spring semester; in Summer semester, it’s considered an additional duty and is compensated separately. Talk to the Director of Composition for more information.