



Understanding Academic Advising at Penn State

<http://www.psu.edu/dus/uac/uaaaps.pdf>

Academic advising at Penn State is a responsibility shared between adviser and advisee. The academic adviser is assigned by the student's college or campus to help students with creating their educational plan and completing requirements. Some students may have additional advisers or counselors (for example, athletes, international students, or comprehensive studies). But the relationship we are talking about here is between the student and the assigned academic adviser.

Students often seek advice from many of the people they know. They talk with the faculty who teach them, with their friends and family members, and with University staff. While these may be good sources of information on careers, research, internships and graduate study, nonetheless, the primary academic adviser is the person to consult about your educational plan. Check eLion (<http://elion.psu.edu/>) to find your adviser's name and e-mail address.

Responsibilities of Advisees and Advisers

The faculty of the University have written the following policy to describe the relationship between students and [their primary academic] advisers and the responsibilities each has.¹

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources. The college or department also will monitor the progress of its advisees towards satisfactory completion of all graduation requirements and inform students of their status each semester. Advisees in turn will routinely contact their advisers each semester and will assume final responsibility for course scheduling, program planning, and the successful completion of graduation requirements. Check eLion to learn your adviser's name and contact information (<http://elion.psu.edu/>).

Responsibilities of Advisees

The advisee's role in the academic advising is to:

1. Acquire the information needed to assume final responsibility for course scheduling, program planning, and the successful completion of all graduation requirements.
2. Seek the academic and career information needed to meet educational goals.
3. Become knowledgeable about the relevant policies, procedures, and rules of the university, college, and academic program.
4. Be prepared with accurate information and relevant materials when contacting the adviser.
5. Consult with the adviser at least once a semester to decide on courses, review the accuracy of the audit, check progress towards graduation, and discuss the suitability of other educational opportunities provided by the university.

Questions You May Want to Ask in Your First Advising Meeting

Some questions you may want to ask in a first conversation with an adviser include these:

How many credits should I be taking?
What requirements should I know about for earning a degree in xxx?
Are there rules for entering the major or changing the major?
How will my transfer credits count toward my Penn State degree?
How do I schedule for next semester?
When do I schedule?
How do I know how I'm doing in my classes? How do I get extra help with my classes?
Should I drop a course? How do I decide? What could happen to me if I don't?
What else should my education include—study abroad, work experience, minors and creative accomplishments?
How do I make a plan for my education?

You can use the *Advising Preparation* module in eLion (<http://elion.psu.edu/>) to let your adviser know what's on your mind. When you use the module, it will send your assigned adviser an e-mail to let her/him know what you want to discuss.

Change of Location Students

After your change of location has been approved, make an appointment with your assigned adviser or the person at the campus who represents your college. You should discuss your schedule for the next semester and other topics related to your change of location. When you arrive at your new campus, be sure to attend any meetings offered to orient you to the new location and start to make connections with others right away. Your college will tell you how to find out the name of your new adviser, and you should make contact with that person to begin to establish your new relationship.

Responsibilities of Advisers

The academic adviser's role is to:

1. Help the advisee to understand the academic and administrative processes of the university and the nature of its academic programs. The adviser also seeks to understand each advisee's particular concerns affecting academic progress. The adviser neither grants nor denies administrative approval for particular academic actions.
2. Help the advisee to understand the expected standards of achievement and likelihood of success in certain areas of study.
3. Discuss the educational and career objectives suited to the advisee's demonstrated abilities and expressed interests. The adviser helps the advisee to understand the relationships among the courses, degree programs, undergraduate research opportunities, internships, study abroad programs, and other academic experiences provided by the university.
4. Help the advisee to plan a course of study and give advice about courses and the adjustment of course loads. The adviser will inform the advisee about the prerequisites for subsequent courses in the advisee's program.
5. Refer advisees to other resources when appropriate.
6. Participate in the adviser training sessions provided by each college or department to keep informed and current.

What to Expect in a First Advising Meeting

In a first meeting with your adviser, s/he may interview you about what is working for you and what may not be working in order to help you create your educational plan. You should be prepared to answer questions like the following ones:

How are things going? What's your favorite class this semester?
Has anything surprised you? How has the surprise affected you?
Are you still considering xxxx major(s)?

- What classes are you considering taking next semester?
- What's your background?
- What are your placements in English, math and chemistry?
- Do you have AP or college credits?
- How are you getting along with your roommate?
- What's your work schedule?
- How well are you able to manage your time to make sure you are studying?
- Have you gotten involved on campus? If not, why haven't you been able to do so?

Some of the Differences Between High School and the University

Because your primary academic adviser at the University may be a member of the faculty or the professional staff, you need to know what the University expects of them and of you. The role of faculty at the University is more complex than the role of high school teachers because faculty are expected to teach and advise, create new knowledge through their research and creative activities, and to serve the community of the University and at large. In addition to advising their students, professional advisers are expected to create and participate in programs for students, work with other offices and groups on their campus, and to serve the community.

The curriculum of the University is diverse. All students are expected to complete a set of University requirements and a specialty area, a major. Because you will be making decisions about what to take and what degree to earn, you need to learn about how the University works.

The following table highlights the differences in some of the circumstances you will encounter by contrasting the roles of high school teachers, counselors, and curriculum to University faculty, professional staff, and curriculum. These differences place more responsibility on you.

High School	University
Students must attend by law	Students decide to enroll
Teachers focused on teaching classes. May also advise a club or coach. See students daily in class.	Faculty expected to teach, to create new knowledge, and to serve the community. See students in class and set office hours.
Teachers educated to become teachers as defined by the state.	Faculty educated to become researchers or creative artists focused on their specialty as defined by their academic subject.
Counselors expected to create student schedules, conduct testing, offer vocational, college, and personal counseling.	Professional advisers expected to advise students and create programs. See students by appointment or walk-in hours.
Counselors educated in counseling to fulfill defined role set by state.	Professional advisers educated in academic disciplines as are faculty.
High school requirements set by the state and course offerings focused on college or vocational tracks. Few electives or choices for students.	University requirements set by faculty, guided by principles of higher education, accrediting agencies, state requirements, and/or licensure rules. Much variation and many decisions for students to make for themselves.
Classes meet daily with frequent feedback to students through grading of homework and testing.	Classes meet less frequently or may not meet in person. More independent work expected. Feedback to students infrequent compared to high school.

Understanding the differences in expectations and responsibilities—for advisers and advisees—is the first step in establishing a successful advising relationship. Together you can work to create an educational experience that is personally rewarding and enriching.

ⁱ Faculty Senate Policy 32-20