

The Academic Advising Manual

Academic
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I. Academic Advising: A Definition

Academic advising is a collaborative and ongoing relationship between a learner and an academic advisor. The intent of this collaboration is to assist the learner in developing meaningful educational goals that are consistent with personal interests, values and abilities. Although many individuals in the College (i.e. faculty, career counselor, admission and registration officers, etc) may assist the learner in making decisions and accomplishing goals, the academic advisor is granted formal authority by the academic unit to approve the learner's academic program of study and assist the learner in progressing toward the appropriate degree.

Below are some of the most comprehensive definitions for Academic Advising which were compiled by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA):

- Advising is a process in which advisor and advisee enter a dynamic relationship respectful of the learner's concerns. Ideally, the advisor serves as teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the learner's self-awareness and fulfillment. [O'Banion, 1972]
- Academic Advising is a process in which learners seek and receive guidance with academic program planning, usually from a faculty advisor. Meaningful educational planning is compatible with a learner's life goals, therefore academic advising encompasses discussion of life goals and assistance with the developmental process of life goals clarification. The ultimate responsibility for making decisions about educational plans and life goals rests with the individual learner. Assistance with the clarification of life goals is not limited to the academic advising relationship, and may include staff in areas such as career development, residential life, and counseling. For academic advisors, assisting learners in the clarification of life goals means helping learners explore and define

their educational and career goals in an atmosphere of mutual respect and learning. Advising, while non-prescriptive, encourages learners to think critically, seek out resources, and develop action steps. The desired result is that learners will feel a sense of connection with the advisor and a sense of guidance, while realizing personal responsibility for exploring options and making decisions. [University of Vermont].

- The following are all excerpts from the Noel-Levitz Participant Book/Resource Guide (1997). Introduction and Foundation, *Academic Advising for Learner Success and Retention*. Iowa City, Iowa : USA Group Noel-Levitz.
 - Academic advising is a planning process that helps learners to approach their education in an organized and meaningful way. Advising brings together all of the major dynamics in a learner's life.
 - Academic advising is a process of teaching learners how to become responsible consumers of their own educations. It's also a process that involves teaching learners how to make viable academic decisions.
 - Advising is a process of giving learners guidance, support and encouragement.
 - Advising is a process of helping learners diminish the confusion that comes with a new environment, clarify their goals and get the most out of their education.

Nowadays, the academic advising literature offers many definitions of the advising process that are grounded in a developmental perspective. Developmental academic advising is defined as a systematic process based on a close learner-advisor relationship intended to aid learners in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources [Enders, Winston & Miller, 1982]. It

both stimulates and supports learners in their quest for an enriched quality of life. Developmental advising relationships focus on identifying and accomplishing life goals, acquiring skills and attitudes that promote intellectual and personal growth, and sharing concerns for each other and for the academic community. Developmental academic advising reflects the institution's mission of total learner development and is most likely to be realized when the academic affairs and learner affairs divisions collaborate in its implementation.

The definition will be most difficult to implement if assigned exclusively to the faculty, given the present status of relationships between learners and faculty. To be successful, it must be a collaborative effort between academic affairs and learners services.

II. Principles of Academic Advising

Ender, Winston, and Miller (1982) have proposed seven principles that are essential in the advising process if the goal of developmental advising is to be achieved. These principles have proven utility within the context of developmental advising.

1. ***Academic advising is a continuous process with an accumulation of personal contacts between advisor and learner--these contacts have both direction and purpose.*** Whether in the context of the group format or a series of individual appointments between advisor and learner, the process must be one that is purposeful. Both participants should be aware of the purpose the institution ascribes to the advising process. Out-come objectives of "quality" advising must be established and communicated to administrators, faculty, staff, and learners. Each participant in the advising process should have an understanding of what advising can and cannot deliver. Responsibilities of each concerned party should be clearly defined and understood.

2. ***Advising must concern itself with quality-of-life issues, and the advisor has a responsibility to attend to the quality of the learner's experience in college.*** This condition is directly related to the mission of the institution. Are learner outcome goals established by the institution and do they reflect intellectual, personal, physical, and moral/ethical concerns? If so, are advisors aware of and do they communicate to learners the available resources and services that are designed to enhance the quality of the learner's educational experience? Are learners aware of the objectives of the institution as they relate to learner outcomes as a result of college participation? Do advisors understand their critical roles as institutional representatives? These are important questions that need affirmative responses if the goal of developmental advising is to be achieved.

3. **Advising is goal related.** The goals should be established and owned by the learner and should encompass academic, career, and personal development areas. The formation of

learner goals and objectives must be one outcome of the advising process. The advisor should assist in the goal-setting process and challenge learners to consider the outcomes they are seeking as a result of their interaction with the higher-education environment. The articulation and recording of goals lend direction to the learner's matriculation and assist in the clarification of both learner and advisor roles in the process.

4. Advising requires the establishment of a caring human relationship--one in which the advisor must take primary responsibility for its initial development. All institutions of higher education must communicate to learners their regard for them as individuals in the learning process. The strength of this relationship will illustrate the institution's willingness to work with learners as individuals striving to take full advantage of the resources available to enhance their educational success.

5. Advisors should be models for learners to emulate, specifically demonstrating behaviors that lead to self-responsibility and self-directiveness. Perhaps the greatest impact a faculty or types of outcome behaviors the college is attempting to foster helping learners learn basic skills necessary to live and fulfills these roles, are models--whether they like it or not. All advisors need to consider the impact they are having on learners as a result of the interactions that take place between them and the behaviors they demonstrate in and out of the classroom and advising office.

6. Advising should seek to integrate the services and expertise of both academic and learner affairs professionals. One strength of any advising system

is the attention paid to the area of faculty-staff collaboration. Scarce resources, as well as practical considerations, mandate a symbiotic relationship between learner affairs and academic affairs. There is no place within the present-day realities of higher education for either the duplication of services. Collaboration is essential to the overall success of an advising system concerned with the learners' total development.

7. Advisors should seek to utilize as many resources as possible. The collaboration called for should manifest itself through the referral process. Up-to-date information in the areas of academic and learner services and the ability to make timely and appropriate referrals are essential for any successful advising program.

This definition and seven conditions challenge the advisor and institution to engage with learners in ways that stretch them.

III. The Importance of Academic Advising

Academic Advising as a means of promoting learner persistence is mentioned in the literature more often than any other learner service, and empirical studies confirm the importance of academic advising to learner retention [Thomas, 1990]. In addition, Pascarella and Terenzini [1991] summarize twenty years of research findings showing that a high quality advising program influences grades, learner satisfaction, and learner intentions, all of which have been shown to affect learner persistence.

A quality learner-centered academic advising program is critical to learner retention and success in higher education. In addition, research has consistently linked learner retention and success to a number of factors that could be incorporated into such a system:

- **Support services early in the learner's career.** Various conducted studies show that attrition rates are highest in the first year of enrollment. Institutions that are purposeful with regard to learners' early experiences are more likely to

influence learner success. Dedicating significant resources to learners early in their academic careers is important because it is during this period that the learner develops positive expectations for self experience, habits that are conducive to success, and commitment to the institution and to his/her educational goals [Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1996; Tinto, 1993].

- **Experiences that reinforce a sense of inclusion and self-efficacy.** Learners, particularly those from underrepresented groups, who believe that the institution is responding to them as individuals, who have a sense that they belong and have the skills necessary to succeed, are likely to complete their education and indicate satisfaction with the experience [Rendon & Garza, 1996].
- **Support services that are challenging rather than remedial.** Studies show that academic support services that contribute to learner learning and development are those that challenge learners to meet high levels of achievement rather than reinforcing stereotypes with low expectations for achievement. [Kuh, 1999].
- **Purposeful and frequent interactions with faculty and academic professionals.** These interactions may be inside and outside the classroom in formal and informal settings [Terenzini, Pascarella & Blimling, 1996].
- **Significant and educationally purposeful interactions with peers.** These are opportunities that take advantage of natural peer relations and are structured in a way that is educationally purposeful (i.e. participation in learner learners' clubs, organizations and associations; use of peers in orientation and advising, etc).[Terenzini et al., 1996].
- **Support that is holistic rather than fragmented.** Learners value support that connects and integrates their experiences into a meaningful whole. This integration includes the melding of in-classroom and out-of-classroom experiences and integrates academic, career and life goals. Advising serves to help learners integrate their whole learning experience [Kuh, Branch, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994].
- **Experiences that increase learner commitment to educational goals and the institution.** Goal and institutional commitment correlate with persistence. Experiences that assist the learner to connect to the institution socially and academically increase goal commitment [Tinto, 1993].
- **Support services that aid learners in negotiating the higher educational system.** Services that help learners develop skills in maneuvering and managing the

complex higher education environment are critical, particularly for learners unfamiliar with higher education. Advising should assist the learner in making sense of and negotiating the "physical, social, and academic/cognitive geography" [Attinasi, 1989] of the institution. In this way learners can make sound choices among alternative pathways they could travel in attaining academic and career goals.

- **Pre-enrollment advising that assists learners with academic planning.**

Research suggests that early contact with someone at the institution matters. Learners are more likely to persist toward their educational goals if they experience early contact with personnel from the institution. Pascarella and Terenzini [1991] report that the weight of the research evidence suggests a positive link between new learner orientation and persistence.

IV. Academic Advising at the e-TQM College:

1. Mission Statement and Goals

1.1. Mission:

"To provide high quality services to assist College learners in the achievement of their academic goals and in the development of meaningful educational plans that will be compatible with their career's aspirations and will empower them to meet their full potential".

1.2. Goals:

- To collaborate with learners on the development and implementation of academic plans and educational experiences congruent with the learner's interests and abilities.
- To regularly monitor and evaluate learner's educational progress.
- To ensure that learners have access to knowledgeable and informed academic advisors who demonstrate care and respect.
- To mentor and assist learners with special needs and requirements such as probational learners, transferred learners and learner with low academic standing.
- To develop learner and faculty awareness and understanding of the academic advising process.
- To encourage learners' utilization of various College resources such as the e-CAPS, Online Admission and Registration Application, Counseling Services, LRC, etc.
- To continuously improve the academic advising service via conducting ongoing assessment.

- To continuously improve the advisor skills by developing advisors' community which will exchange best practices and by conducting regular workshops and seminars on academic advising.
- To constantly improve the College learners' retention rate

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Effective academic advising requires a collaborative relationship between the institution, the academic advisor and the learners, each having particular roles and responsibilities.

2.1. The College Role

- To foster a community that promotes student success.
- To provide the resources and professional development necessary for effective and quality academic advising.
- To seek input from academic advisors and students when considering and implementing policy and curricular changes.
- To recognize the value of excellence in academic advising
- To regularly assess the efficiency of the academic advising process

2.2. The Academic Advisor Role

- To assist learners in developing an educational action plan that correlates with their life goals and objectives.
- To aid learners in developing decision-making skills and a sense of autonomy, and assist in proper assessment of progress toward established goals.
- To monitor and communicate with the learners their progress and achievements.
- To effectively and accurately answer learners' inquiries about the College policies, procedures, program of study and educational opportunities.

- To provide learners with accurate and consistent information about academic policies, procedures and programs.
- To make themselves available during the registration period and oversee the course enrollment process (assist in course selection, approved selected courses, etc) of all learners.
- To assist learners in resolving any problems or issues they may face (i.e. grade appeal) throughout their journey at the College.
- To assist learners in their consideration of career goals by relating their interests, abilities, skills and values to the world of work. This is usually achieved jointly with the e-CAPS office.
- To clearly inform learners of the purpose and importance of academic advising and ensure that they are aware about when to consult with their academic advisor.
- To make referrals and direct learners to appropriate departments, units, offices and resources when necessary.
- To increase learners' awareness of the wide range of learners' services and educational opportunities available at the e-TQM college.
- To review and certify learner academic records for graduation.
- To support learners in registering for internship programs when applicable
- To be well informed about all college programs, policies, procedures and services to effectively advice learners.
- To maintain files for all advised learners.

2.3. Learners (Advisees) Role

- To recognize that advising is a shared responsibility but also realize that learners are ultimately responsible for making decisions regarding academic, career, and personal goals.
- To familiarize with the College academic policies, procedure and program of study.
- To be aware of the various dates indicated in the College Academic Calendar.
- To accept responsibility for the completion and quality of their education e-TQM College.
- To show willingness on an on-going basis to assess their skills, interests and abilities.
- To notify the academic advisor of any changes in academic plans (i.e. transfer credit, credit by exam, enrolling in summer session, etc)
- To contact their academic advisor for any issue or problem they may encounter during their study period at the College.
- To regularly communicate with their advisors (at least twice a semester at the beginning and end) and attend any meeting scheduled with the advisor
- To develop plans for achieving academic, career, and personal goals
- To effectively utilize the full range of learners' services and educational opportunities.
- To evaluate the academic advising process when requested in order to strengthen the advising it.

3. Academic Advising Load

Academic advising is one of the main responsibilities of full time faculty members at the e-TQM College. Academic advisors are assigned to learners at the time of admission to the program of study; usually the same academic advisor will follow the learner throughout his/her program.

Academic Advisors should allow an appropriate amount of time for students to discuss plan, program, course, academic progress, and other subjects related to their educational programs. Therefore the ratio of advisees to advisors (advisor load) has been limited between 1:25 to 1:40 at most. The variation for the load distribution includes a number of factors which include but is not limited to:

- **The Advisee Background:** Advisors who work primarily with students who have more extensive advising needs (first year learners, transfer learners, learners under academic probational or with unsatisfactory academic advising) should have fewer advisees.
- **Advisee Geographical Location:** Advising learners who are at distant geographical location (particularly freshman learners) might be more demanding in the absence of face-to-face interaction. Advisors who work with learners at distance may often need to rely on email and other communication tools which may require more time and effort.
- **Academic Advisor other responsibilities:** Academic advisors who are assigned by their respective unit or by the College responsibilities other than teaching and research (i.e. chairing a unit, being part of committees

and councils across the college, holding administrative responsibilities, etc) should be allocated fewer advises.

Learners with unsatisfactory academic standing

Learners with Warning or Probationary status are often those most in need of careful advising. Paradoxically, these are the learners least likely to seek out their advisors or to follow through on the advice received. However, academic advisors may find that helping these learners succeed can be the most rewarding advising experience.

Many learners in academic difficulty lack specific skills such as time management, proper study habits, or self-discipline. They usually are reluctant to seek help and do not know what resources are available to assist them. However, if they are willing to make a commitment to change old habits and learn new skills, they can learn the strategies that are needed to be successful academically .

Academic advisors with the assistance of other developed resources and services such as personal counselors, e-CAPS staff, Learning Resource Center, etc can play a critical role by offering assistance to these learners.

The advising load for academic advisor is usually distributed by the Director of program across various unit full time faculty members. An advisor coordinator for each academic unit will be nominated by the director of program; the role of the coordinator is to orient and guide new academic advisors, in addition the advisor coordinator is responsible for informing other advisor about changes in academic policies and procedures and to work with other members of the unit to solve special advising problems. The coordinator shall also monitor closely the quality of the advising process and ensure that it meets the goals of the College. In summary these are the main roles and responsibilities of the advisor coordinators:

- Conduct orientation session for all new academic advisors
- Create and distribute the academic advising manual, catalogs and all other related resources for faculty advisors.
- Communicate and coordinate advising information including updates and changes approved policies and procedures
- Provide support for faculty advisors including assistance in developing and writing departmental advising plans,
- Provide an initial advising session⁴ to all freshman learners.
- Work with other academic advisors to develop alternative orientation and advising for distance learners.
- Regularly assess to improve the advising process at the e-TQM College
- Continuously explore new methodologies and new strategies for academic advising
- Organize workshops and sessions to improve the academic advising skills for the academic advisors.

4. Methods for Academic Advising

Because of the geographical separation between learners and advisors inherent in e-learning, the advising process may occur in a variety of ways as explained below.

4.1. Advising Learners by e-mail

E-mail is the most convenient and practical way of responding to learners' inquiries, it is advised that records of any correspondence between learners and advisors are saved in learner's files.

4.2. Advising Using Chat

Faculty may choose to use the chat feature to advise, if this is the case:

- Faculty must inform learners of the times when they will be available for individual consultation via chat.
- Faculty should use the appropriate feature of the online learning technology to automatically save the contents of the chat session to a text file.

4.3. Phone Advising

In certain cases, faculty members may choose to advise learners via phone, although the College favors the previous two methods of advising. If such a situation occurs, faculty members need to document the type of advising they have provided to the learner mentioning the day and time where the advising was made.

4.4. On Site Face to Face Advising

Whenever, possible and when no geographical boundaries exist between advisors and learners. Learners may choose to visit their advisors on College campus; prior scheduling for such meetings must be made.

5. Resources for Academic Advising

In order for academic advisors to deliver quality advising to learners, the e-TQM college has established a number of offices and units across the college, these units and offices in many cases are tightly bounded to the functions of academic advising. In addition the College has developed a number of resources and application, these include:

5.1. Offices and Units:

- The Office of Admission and Registration
- The e-CAPS Office
- The LRM Office
- The Financial Aid and Scholarship office
- The Learner Services Unit
- Personal Counselors

5.2. Resources and System

- The Online Admission and Registration Application
- The Online Library and other learning resources
- The Learning Resource Center (LRC)

5.3. Handbooks, Manuals, Catalog and other documentation

- The Program Catalog
- Learner Handbook
- Academic Advising Manual
- The internship Manual
- Learner Newsletter
- Interactive CD on online learning

6. Academic Advising Assessment

In order to continuously improve the academic advising process the e-TQM College has established an annual assessment mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the process. The assessment primarily relies on tools such as surveys targeting academic advisors and advisees (see appendix), analysis of data related to retention and transfer rate, focus groups and informal discussion with learners.

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Appendix A

Advisor Assessment Survey (Learner Survey)

Please help us to improve the quality of academic advising by completing this survey thoughtfully and honestly. We especially need and value your written comments below in the open-ended question these comments will enable us to understand why you chose to rate the item as you did. Your written comments also provide advisors with the type of specific feedback they need to make improvements.

Thank you in advance for your help. We will read your comments carefully, consider them seriously, and make an earnest attempt to improve the quality of academic advising for all present and future students at our college.

Program Name: _____ **Semester:** _____ **Year:** _____

Advisor Name: _____

My current classification is: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

My current enrollment status is: Full-Time Part-Time

My accumulative grade point average (AGPA) is:

Less than 1.0 1.0-1.99 2.0-2.99 3.0-4.0

Please specify your age: _____

Please rate on a scale from 1-5 the following statements about your advisor. 1 is the lowest assignment while 5 is the highest.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. My academic advisor is a good source for accurate information about programs, policies and procedures across the college					
2. My academic advisor listens closely to my concerns and questions, whether they are academic, professional, or personal.					
3. My academic advisor helps me evaluate my progress toward graduation (e.g. how many credits fulfilled in each requirement, how many left).					

4. My academic advisor is available and accessible when needed.						
5. My academic advisor encourages me to meet him/ her						
6. My academic advisor helps me understand why required courses are important for my professional development and future plans.						
7. My academic advisor have positively impacted my continued enrollment at the e-TQM College						
8. My academic advisor have promptly replied to my inquiries placed in various format						
9. My academic advisor communicated effectively with me and understood my needs						

Please answer the following questions:

1. What are your advisor's major strengths or best features?

2. What could your advisor to improve the quality of his/her advising?

3. Would you recommend your advisor to other students?

4. List the number of times your academic advisor has initiated contact with you during the academic year _____

5. List the number of times you have initiated contact with you academic advisor _____

6. How many times during the academic year have you met your academic advisor? _____

Appendix B

Advisor Assessment Survey

(Academic Advisor Survey)

We are seeking your input on the academic advising process at our college, with the intent of strengthening and improving the program.

Please return this survey to the academic coordinator of your unit by mail one week after receiving it. Thank you for your time and effort.

Specify the No. of Years You Have Been Advising at College: _____

Specify the No. of Learner You Presently Advise: _____

Specify the Classification of the Learners you advise:

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

1. Which one of the following best characterizes your attitude toward advising?

- _____ I find advising pleasant and rewarding.
 _____ I have neither very positive nor very negative feelings toward advising.
 _____ I find advising unpleasant.

Reason/rationale for this response:

2. Which one of the following best captures your perception of learners' attitudes toward the advising process?

- _____ Learners find the advising process pleasant and rewarding.
 _____ Learners have neither very positive nor very negative feelings about the advising process.
 _____ Learners find the advising process unpleasant and frustrating.

Reason/rationale for this response:

3. My academic advising experience is best characterized by the following (check as many as apply):

- Learners often do not keep appointments.
- Learners often do not come with any pre-planned schedule.
- I give accurate advice and answers on curricular requirements.
- I give accurate advice and answers to learners' questions relating to their options after graduation.
- I help my advisees to resolve their personal problems.
- I refer my advisees to others for assistance on matters that are beyond my expertise.
- I encourage my advisees to become involved in college services

4. Overall, how would you rate the academic advisement at our college?

- highly effective moderately effective slightly effective
- highly ineffective moderately ineffective highly ineffective

5. What do you find to be the most rewarding aspect of academic advising?

6. What do you find to be the most frustrating or dissatisfying aspect of academic advising?

7. In what ways might our academic advisement process be improved?

8. What type(s) of additional personal or institutional support do you think would make the advising process more effective and/or satisfying for advisors?

Final Comments/Suggestions/Recommendations: