

## VII. ACADEMIC ADVISING

A university education is a complex and multi-faceted experience, which is best undertaken in a supportive and encouraging environment. As part of its dedication to student success, the University of Guelph is committed to providing high-quality academic advising, in order to assist students in the development and pursuit of academic objectives consistent with their life goals and the available opportunities at the University. The responsibility for developing educational plans and setting goals rests with the student. Academic advising contributes to this process by identifying alternatives, exploring likely outcomes, and referring students to appropriate resources.

Academic advising at Guelph is delivered by a team which includes faculty advisors, program counsellors, the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre (UAIC), the Associate Vice-President (Academic) and others. Coordinating all activity is the University's Council on Undergraduate Academic Advising (CUAA), which has responsibility for overall advising systems direction and policy. The UAIC provides general walk-in assistance to students and, as appropriate, directs students to specialized advising resources. Each student has direct access to a Program Counsellor, who assists with degree program requirements and expectations. Students who are registered in a degree program that requires/allows for the declaration of a specialization (major, minor, area of concentration) also have direct access to Faculty Advisors. Faculty Advisors are assigned to specializations and focus on subject-related issues and advice.

These components of the academic advising system work together to achieve goals and objectives that include:

- helping students develop an educational plan and choose an appropriate course of studies to meet their academic and life objectives
- ensuring that students are aware of opportunities and resources that can assist them in achieving their educational goals
- assisting students in interpreting university policies and procedures, and applying general rules to their specific cases
- facilitating resolution of academic problems, conflicts and concerns, as appropriate
- referring students as necessary to other resource units
- collecting and disseminating information on student needs, wants, perceptions, and trends in order to enhance institutional effectiveness and adaptability

Within the system, specific roles and responsibilities are distributed as indicated below:

### Council on Undergraduate Academic Advising

The role of the Council on Undergraduate Academic Advising (CUAA) (<https://www.uoguelph.ca/vpacademic/avpa/cuaa/>) is to develop, review, discuss, and recommend to senior administration on an ongoing basis any and all advising-related strategies, policies, and processes.

The CUAA is responsible for managing and directing academic advising policies at the university. The CUAA reports to, and is chaired by the Associate Vice-President (Academic). Membership includes broad representation from stakeholders across the university community including, but not limited to: program counsellors, faculty advisors, Office

of Registrarial Services, deans, chairs, Student Affairs, Open Learning and Educational Support/ SCOL, undergraduate students, Centre for International Programs, and the Coordinator of the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre. The Council normally meets once per semester.

The CUAA develops strategic directions and formulates policy on advising issues, coordinates planning around academic advising issues, and serves as a permanent communication channel to help coordinate the work of the various individuals and entities engaged in academic advising activities.

### Faculty Advisors

Most undergraduate degree programs have a faculty advisor for each of their specializations. A contact list for current faculty advisors is available on the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre website at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/uaic/facultyadvisors/>.

### Role of the Faculty Advisor

The faculty advisor has particular expertise in the program *specialization* (major, minor, area of concentration, area of emphasis) and the fit of that specialization within the degree program. The role of the faculty advisor is to:

- provide information about the academic requirements of the specialization, including eligibility to declare the specialization and graduation requirements
- refer to other campus services, as necessary
- communicate information about the specialization to the department and the curriculum committee, program committee, and program counsellor, and to bring forward any concerns or issues as students progress through the Schedule of Studies for the specialization
- liaise with the program counsellor for the degree program, in order to provide information about the specialization as it fits within the degree program

### Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor

The responsibilities of the faculty advisor are to:

- be familiar with the academic requirements of the specialization, including eligibility to declare the specialization and graduation requirements
- assist students wishing to change or add specializations
- assist the student to make academic decisions
- refer students to the program counsellors, as appropriate
- offer advice about meeting the requirements of the Schedule of Study for the specialization
- be reasonably available to meet with students, as requested
- assist with graduation checks, as requested
- approve substitutions or exemptions for the specialization
- be aware of career and graduate study opportunities related to the field of study, or refer appropriately
- assist with course selection issues related to the specialization
- provide information to the department, curriculum committee, program committee, and program counsellor about issues or concerns concerning the Schedule of Studies for the specialization
- provide information and advice to the department and college, as requested, around enrolment management issues

## Program Counsellors

All undergraduate degree programs have a program counsellor. A contact list for current program counsellors is available on the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre website at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/uaic/programcounsellors/>.

### Role of the Program Counsellor

The Program Counsellor has particular expertise in the *degree program* requirements and regulations, as well as the various specializations and their fit within the degree program. The Program Counsellor is also familiar with the policies and procedures that govern university practice. The role of the program counsellor is to:

- provide information about the academic requirements of the *degree program*, including admission requirements, Schedule of Studies requirements, Continuation of Study requirements, and graduation requirements
- refer to other campus services, as necessary
- communicate information about the degree program to the dean, chairs and directors, faculty advisors, curriculum committees, program committees (and their sub-committees); and to bring forward any concerns or issues as students progress through the Schedule of Studies for the degree program
- liaise with the faculty advisor for the specialization, in order to provide information about the degree program and the fit of the specialization within the degree program

### Responsibilities of the Program Counsellor

The responsibilities of the program counsellor are to:

- be familiar with the academic requirements of the degree program and its specializations, including admission requirements, the Schedule of Studies and Continuation of Study requirements, and graduation requirements for the degree program
- assist the student to make academic decisions and understand the implications of those decisions
- assist with course selection and enrolment management issues as related to the degree program
- explain transfer procedures and requirements
- explain appeal procedures
- assist with graduation checks
- sign program approval, as appropriate
- change student type, as appropriate
- meet with students as requested, or required
- refer to the faculty advisor, as appropriate
- uphold the academic policies of the university
- help interpret the academic policies and procedures to students, staff, and faculty
- act as a source of referral to other campus services
- be generally aware of career and graduate study opportunities related to the field of study, or refer appropriately
- work closely with the faculty advisor on any changes to the Schedule of Studies
- consult, as necessary, with other campus services

- provide relevant information to the faculty advisors, departments, dean, curriculum and program committees (and sub-committees) about student issues with the degree program
- participate at liaison events, as requested

## Undergraduate Academic Information Centre

The role of the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre (UAIC) (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/uaic/>) (U.C. Level 3, North extension 56613, [uaic@uoguelph.ca](mailto:uaic@uoguelph.ca)) is to provide general academic advising information to undergraduate students. This includes appropriate referral to the program counsellor, or faculty advisor, as well as other support services on campus.

For some students, the Centre may function as a first point of contact for information about academic issues. Peer helpers in the unit operate on an assessment and referral system - first helping the student to identify the problem or issue, and then, as necessary, referring them to the appropriate resource (e.g. program counselling office, faculty/specialization advisor, Career Services, Financial Services, etc.).

At the Centre, students will find general information on topics including but not limited to transfer requirements and procedures; Continuation of Study requirements; admission and graduation requirements; information about appeal process and procedures; help with interpreting the calendar; or help with different forms. Students who require more detailed information about their particular degree program requirements, or who have more specific questions may be directed to the program counselling office or to the faculty advisor, as appropriate.

UAIC is a resource for all students, with particular sensitivity to issues facing transfer (advanced standing) students, non-degree and general studies students, and "undecided"<sup>1</sup> students, including first year students or other students contemplating a change in program.

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Although most University of Guelph students declare a major upon entry, "undecided" in this context refers to students who may be declared in a major but are now not sure whether the program is the right fit for their educational, career, or life goals.

## Undergraduate Students Responsibilities of the Undergraduate Student

Undergraduate students admitted to the University are responsible for understanding and meeting certain responsibilities regarding Undergraduate Degree Regulations and Procedures, degree requirements, course requirements, Schedule of Dates, rules of conduct and accessing the University of Guelph email account. These responsibilities are described in Chapter I of the Undergraduate Calendar.

The responsibilities of undergraduate students regarding academic advising are to seek, when necessary:

- information from the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre
- advice and assistance regarding academics from the program counsellor or faculty advisor
- clarification of regulations and procedures from the program counsellor or faculty advisor