

Policy on Advising Taught Students

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1. Introduction

This document defines the University's policy on the formalised provision of support and advice, both academic and pastoral, to students during their period of study at Manchester through the Advising role. It applies to students following undergraduate or postgraduate taught programmes that are delivered primarily on campus.¹

The advising policy here should be read in conjunction with the accompanying guidance document and online resources. Together, they set out the University's basic requirements and expectations in the area. Faculties may approve alternative advising systems that deliver at least an equivalent level of support, but that are more closely tailored to the setup and needs of their respective Schools.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students are provided with high-quality pastoral and academic support through a proactive academic partnership with mutual expectations (the Advising role).

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to academic staff who undertake an Advising role, to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, all of whom will have been assigned at least one Advisor, and to Professional Support Services staff who support the Advising role. The policy should be supplemented by local documentation and guidance that reflects the nature of the programme and discipline.

3.2 The Advising role encompasses the full range of the student experience, *i.e.*:

- Academic support: *e.g.*, reviewing a student's assessments and achievements across their programme of study and giving guidance on where and how to improve;
- Pastoral support: *e.g.*, identifying ways in which the University can support students with particular needs; providing a point of contact and gateway to appropriate services for students experiencing personal difficulties;
- Preparation for careers and life after graduation: *e.g.*, helping students reflect on the skills they have developed and their experiences whilst at Manchester; highlighting appropriate resources and opportunities for the student's chosen career; writing references;
- Aspects specific to any clinical training requirements.

4. Policy

4.1 Every taught student (both undergraduate and postgraduate) will be allocated at least one named academic by each School contributing substantively to their degree programme. These academics will provide academic guidance and/or personal support to their Advisees. Students will normally be allocated a single Advisor, but it is at local discretion to vary this should it be in a student's best interests (for example, a lead School may decide that it would benefit students on joint programmes to have two Advisors).

¹ The advising requirements for students taught through, for example, distance-learning are recognised as being different. Additional policy documents, based around a number of the principles defined here, for advising students taught primarily off campus will be forthcoming.

4.2 Each School will identify a Senior Advisor whose role is to oversee and coordinate the Advising function and act as first point of contact for queries from Advisors that need resolution. The expectation is that a single Senior Advisor will be appointed for each School, although it is at local discretion to vary this should it be considered necessary to appoint more.

4.3 Implementation of the Advising policy will vary based on local context, but in all cases the way in which the policy is implemented must be clearly articulated to students in Student Handbooks.

4.4 Each School must:

- Ensure that, normally, the same academic member(s) of staff take(s) responsibility for a student for the duration of their programme;
- Provide clear, simple information to students about the different types of support available to them within and without the School;
- Emphasise to students that attending Advisor meetings when they are arranged is an essential part of their academic development;
- Ensure that academic staff are clear about their role and responsibilities as Advisors and have received training, guidance and support to help fulfill their responsibilities in this role;
- Ensure that Advising duties are reflected in the Workload Allocation Model and recognised appropriately in cases for promotion

4.5 Each Advisor will make contact with their student advisees at least twice per semester during each year of study, and at least one of these contacts per semester should be through a one-to-one, face-to-face meeting. Students may request additional meetings or the academic may instigate additional meetings as the need arises. Advisors should also take the initiative in arranging an initial Advisor meeting in welcome week or as soon as is practical thereafter.

4.6 Students are permitted to request that their Advisor be changed. They are required to give a valid reason for their request, and this should be considered by the Head of School, or the Senior Advisor on their behalf, for approval if appropriate. If a request to change Advisor is not approved, full details of the reason why must be communicated to the student. If a request is approved, the Head of School, or the Senior Advisor on their behalf, should arrange the necessary transfer. The School office must be advised of any changes so that records can be kept up to date. Schools should provide clear, transparent information to students on how to change their advisor.

4.7 If an Advisor feels that their role is compromised they should ask the Head of School, or the Senior Advisor on their behalf, to provide an alternative advisor to the student.

5. Principles of the Advising Role

5.1 The Advising role should:

- Be undertaken by an appropriately trained member of academic staff;
- Foster an effective academic partnership as part of the academic community with expectations for provision of opportunity (by the University) and participation and engagement (by students);
- Ensure that students are well supported, academically and pastorally, recognising that specialised services, particularly relating to employability and pastoral care, also have important roles to play in delivering this;
- Support the academic, personal and professional development of students, assisting them to develop skills vital for employment, entrepreneurship and

- global citizenship in a structured process that is clearly articulated;
- Be delivered consistently and be available to all taught students;
- Be academically led with the Advisor playing a distinctive, and clearly articulated, role in the delivery of advice, with the aim of supporting a student's general academic and personal development;
- Be based on meetings and other contact between a student and an academic member of staff which are scheduled at regular points during the academic year as set out in paragraph 4.5

5.2 Advisors are not expected to be the only point of contact for academic and pastoral issues, nor be experts in all these areas, but should be able to provide guidance, advice and signposting to appropriate services.

5.3 Individuals undertaking the Advising role may be referred to as *Academic Advisors* or *Personal Advisors*², depending on the exact nature of their role. Some students may have both an Academic Advisor and a Personal Advisor, although if a student only has one Advisor their title should be Academic Advisor. Students on clinically-based programmes may also have a Clinical Academic Advisor.

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² For further information about these roles please see the associated guidance document.