Definition of and Scope of Practice for Academic Advising

NACADA
THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING

Definition of Academic Advising

Academic advising is a field of study and profession that focuses on the intellectual, personal, and educational development of advisees as they engage with higher education. The research-informed practice of academic advising is founded on interpersonal relationships that support, understand, and empower individual advisees to navigate their academic journeys and to make personally, socially, and culturally relevant meaning of their learning experiences. Academic advising creates unique expertise in how curricula, policies, and institutional cultures shape and are shaped by learner goals and experiences.

Scope of Practice for Academic Advising

Acknowledging that individuals may have multiple roles at an institution (e.g., instructor, researcher, administrator), all individuals who are given the responsibility of academic advising share the responsibilities of "academic advisors."

Academic Advisors are responsible for:

- **Communicating, explaining, and interpreting** the institution's curricula, learning outcomes, policies, and procedures in ways that are relevant and tailored to each advisee's unique situation, while ensuring ethical practice and compliance with applicable laws
- **Guiding advisees** in navigating higher education curricula, structures, processes, and cultures with increasing agency and advocating on advisee behalf as appropriate
- **Partnering with each advisee** in short- and long-term goal setting, decision-making, problem-solving, critical-thinking, and planning related to their education, including:
  - **Engaging each advisee** in conversations about their educational experiences, identity, and goals
  - **Co-discovering how each advisees' educational plan relates** to their present and future personal, professional, career, vocational, civic, and other goals
  - **Teaching advisees how to make informed decisions** about their educational plans
  - **Facilitating each advisee's integrative understanding of curricular learning** with their co-curricular and non-academic life experiences
  - **Assisting each advisee's negotiation of challenges that affect academic progress** and identification of opportunities that enhance learning and academic progress
- **Collaborating with other campus partners** who share responsibility for supporting student learning, wellbeing, persistence, and educational outcomes
- **Recognizing an advisee's need** for specialized support and referring advisees or bridging between advisees and those resources when needed
- **Focusing ongoing, proactive, and data-informed attention** on each individual advisee's unique academic journey, including their degree progress, course selection, and academic outcomes, and communicating with individuals about their progress, opportunities, and resources
- **Representing the institution** while keeping each advisee's unique goals and circumstances primary
- **Grounding practice in ongoing learning** from the research and scholarship of advising and selecting advising approaches that are responsive to each student's needs
- **Learning from advisees** about their experiences and applying that knowledge to practice, policy, scholarship, and institutional advocacy
- **Contributing expertise** to influence local curricula, processes, policies, and organizational structures
- **Engaging in ongoing education** and professional development
- **Creating and disseminating new knowledge** about advising and its insights into higher education, either locally or beyond

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Higher Education Institutes are responsible for:

- **Recognizing academic advising** as an essential component of the educational process
- **Creating an advising structure** that is informed by research and scholarship about academic advising
- Where there are multiple units delivering academic advising, **ensuring all advising is conducted with similar policies, technologies, staffing, and compensation** and that students have consistent experiences across units
- **Empowering students to be active** participants in academic advising relationships by creating structures, advising policy, and opportunity for individualized connection
- **Creating conditions under which academic advisors can meet their above advising responsibilities** through assignment of appropriate staffing levels, caseloads, work locations, technologies, professional development, training, assessment infrastructure, access to accurate and transparent information, and timely data about student progress and outcomes
- **Ensuring that one-to-one interactions between academic advisors and advisees are a standard practice**, and that group activities and artificial intelligence resources do not supersede or replace advisor-advisee relationship-building
- **Ensuring that all academic advising interactions and record-keeping practices respect advisee privacy**
- **Ensuring and supporting collaboration** between academic advising and other offices responsible for supporting student learning, wellbeing, persistence, and educational outcomes
- **Ensuring that academic advising does not become a catch-all** for specialized student needs, especially mental health care
- **Supporting ongoing education** and professional development for academic advising
- **Supporting all people who have academic advising responsibilities** (both faculty and staff) in sustainable workloads, professional development, scholarly engagement, academic freedom protection, knowledge dissemination, and professional reward for conducting the responsibilities of advising
- **Creating pathways** for advancement within academic advising that reward depth of expertise and experience
- **Actively seeking and applying expertise** developed through academic advising to governance and decision-making about curricula, processes, policies, and organizational structures

About NACADA

Founded in 1979, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising is the leading professional association dedicated to enhancing the field of academic advising in higher education. With a membership exceeding 14,000 individuals, NACADA serves a global community of advisors, faculty, administrators, and student support professionals. The association offers comprehensive professional development, cutting-edge research, consulting services, and a collaborative network, all aimed at promoting student success and institutional effectiveness. By championing the pivotal role of academic advising, NACADA empowers its members to elevate advising practices and enhance the student experience.

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