

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

Comment [GC1]: This statement recognises that students on DL and blended learning programmes will need supplementary guidance.

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.

Comment [GC2]: This additional text responds to a request for greater local discretion.

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.

Comment [GC3]: This statement has been added to place the overarching policy in a local context.

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).

Comment [GC4]: This additional text responds to a request for greater local discretion.

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.

Comment [GC5]: This additional text responds to a request for greater local discretion. Concerns were raised by large Schools and those who requested a demarcation between UG and PGT support.

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.

Comment [GC6]: It is recognised that information about the frequency of meetings in earlier drafts was unclear. This version presents this requirement consistently.

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.

Comment [GC7]: The exact timing of the extra meeting in Y1 has been relaxed compared to previous versions.

Comment [GC8]: This has been changed following concerns that an unregulated system would lead to issues including favouritism and unequal workloads.

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.

Guidance

Part 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Definition of an Advisor

An Advisor is an appropriately trained member of academic staff. She/he will be a student's first port of call for advice or direction to further support on academic and pastoral matters.

Role of the Academic Advisor

- To assist students with the process of induction and orientation into academic life and the University community and respond promptly to any communication from him/her;
- To work with students to build personal academic relationships;
- To retain an interest in their students' personal and general academic and professional development throughout their academic careers while at the University, providing information and guidance on academic choice;
- To monitor both academic performance and student engagement in a proactive manner and advise on constructive strategies to enable improvement, for example through the use of a personal portfolio or personal development plan;
- To offer general academic advice to their allocated students on their general progress and development towards the fulfilment of the Purposes of a Manchester Education, and to signpost relevant careers and skills development provision to enhance employability;
- To listen and offer students help and advice about pastoral/non-academic matters and to signpost students to other student services for further assistance if necessary;
- To ensure that a note is kept of discussions at each meeting (with the student) and any follow-up actions agreed with the student;
- To provide references.

Comment [GC9]: This activity is now listed explicitly.

Role of the Personal Advisor

A subset of the Academic Advisor's role may be carried out by a Personal Advisor in order to offer supplementary advice on academic matters and personal problems. A Personal Advisor may, for example, provide advice on academic progress and employability, and discuss and refer on health issues as appropriate.

Comment [GC10]: An explicit emphasis has been placed on employability. Advisors are no longer expected to advise on health issues, but instead to refer them on to qualified professionals.

Role of the student

Students are expected to:

- Attend and prepare for all arranged meetings with their Advisor and respond promptly to any communication from him/her;
- Make appropriate use of all the support and guidance offered at the University;
- Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties (academic or personal) at the earliest possible opportunity;
- Report promptly to their School or Advisor when they are ill or have other good reason for non-attendance or failing to meet deadlines;
- Keep records of meetings and agreed actions.

Students can expect:

- To be given an Advisor who:
 - Will assist with the process of induction and orientation into academic life and the University community;
 - Will retain an interest in their personal and general academic development throughout their academic career;
 - Will offer general academic advice on their general progress and development and signpost relevant careers and skills development provision;
 - Will offer help and advice about pastoral/non-academic matters and signpost

- students to other student services for further assistance if necessary;
 - May be approached to provide references;
 - May be invited to offer guidance or advice on University processes, *e.g.*, disciplinary procedures, extenuating circumstances.
- To request to change their Advisor should they so wish.

Frequency of meetings

Advisors will make contact with their assigned students at least twice per semester during each year of their studies. At least one of these contacts per Semester should be through a one-to-one, face-to-face meeting. Students should be proactive in setting up any further meetings that are considered necessary. Advisors should also take the initiative in arranging an initial Advisor meeting in welcome week, or as soon as is practical thereafter. All meetings should be structured with a clear and agreed agenda. Some meetings may be held in group tutorials where this is appropriate to the purpose. An Advisor may initiate a meeting where there are reports of unsatisfactory attendance or progress from unit coordinators or in the event of any other cause for concern.

Role of the School

Each School is expected to:

- Ensure that all students on taught programmes are assigned appropriately **trained** Advisor prior to or on arrival;
- Ensure that accurate information about the purpose and operation of the Advising system is drawn proactively to the attention of students *via* degree programme handbooks and other sources and during the first meeting with the Advisor;
- Ensure that all staff undertaking Advising have been given appropriate information on the expectations of the role and the supporting resources available and offered training if required;
- Evaluate annually the operation of the Advising system within the School (collating student feedback through Student-Staff Liaison Committee and Boards of Studies where general feedback on the operation of the Advising system should be reviewed annually, and through questionnaires where these are used), indicating the ways in which University expectations are met, and to report on this, *via* the Senior Advisor, to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee;
- Ensure the Advising system is well communicated to students and all staff;
- Co-ordinate Advising provision within the School;
- Ensure continuity of Advising throughout a student's degree programme as far as is possible. Where the role is re-assigned, the student should be informed immediately.

Comment [GC11]: Emphasis now placed on 'trained' rather than 'qualified and experienced'. This also confirms that colleagues on probation who are appropriately trained can be Advisors.

Role of the Head of School

- To allocate Advisors to students in line with institutional principles and in accordance with the School's workload model. The recommended minimum time commitment per student adjusted depending on local agreement on tutorial formats (*e.g.*, group tutorials) is as follows:
 - Minimum two meetings in Semester 1 (15-20 minutes each)
 - Minimum one meeting in Semester 2 (15-20 minutes)
 - Meeting preparation/record-keeping time - 1 hour
- To identify a Senior Advisor for the School;
- **To ensure that appropriate training is provided for all Advisors;**
- **To consider requests by students to change their Advisor.**

Comment [GC12]: These bullets have been added.

Role of the Senior Advisor

- To act as a co-ordinating point for general communication between the School and central student and academic services, *e.g.*, disseminating information about institutional student support and services;

- To act as a second point of contact for a student in the event of the allocated Advisor's absence from the University, and in the event of complicated issues;
- To act as a point of contact for other Advisors;
- To report to the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee on the annual evaluation of the operation of the Advising system within the School;
- If requested by the Head of School, to consider requests by students to change their Advisor.

Comment [GC13]: This requirement has been simplified and is now linked to explicitly from Bullet 4 of the 'Role of the School' section.

Comment [GC14]: This bullet has been added.

Role of the Faculty

- To monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the University's expectations of the Advising system, *via* annual reports from the Senior Advisor to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee on the implementation of the Advising system.

Role of the University

- To maintain an overview of the implementation and effectiveness of the University's Advising provision;
- To support Advisors and Senior Advisors, the University will provide easily accessible information regarding relevant student support services as well as training and guidance on the areas expected to be covered by the Advising system;
- To enable Advisors to easily access to relevant student information and data;
- To ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to recognise high quality performance in Advising *via* recognition within the academic promotions criteria, and an institutional award scheme for Advisors.

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Part 2: Timetables and Agendas for Advisor Meetings

As outlined in the Policy on Advising Taught Students, advisors are expected to 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 take the form of a one-to-one face-to-face meeting. For undergraduate students, a face-to-face meeting between the advisor and the student should also be arranged in Year 1 welcome week, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Comment [GC15]: As in the rest of the document, this ensures that the minimum expectation is one f-2-f meeting per semester (with an additional one in Y1) and one other form of contact, which has been left deliberately flexible.

Sequence of Meetings

The following table sets out the expected pattern of face-to-face meetings between advisors and students:

Undergraduate students

	Welcome Week	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
Years 2 and beyond		Meeting 1	Meeting 2

Advisor meetings should take place in all years of student enrolment, including study abroad years (or Semesters) and placement years. When students are away from The University as part of their studies, discretion in the format of advisor meetings will be employed. For example, a Skype meeting may be considered as a suitable replacement for a face-to-face meeting under these circumstances.

Postgraduate taught students

	Semester 1	Semester 2
All years	Meeting 1	Meeting 2

Group Meetings

It is recognised that the approach to Advising should be adapted to local School arrangements in order to take advantage of local expertise and to build on existing good practice. It is recognised that group meetings can take place in order to provide updates and to share information (for example as part of an induction to Advising) and that they can also provide a valuable networking opportunity to students. Group meetings should be used only to supplement the minimum number of meetings outlined in the Policy.

Indicative Agendas for Meetings

The timetables and agendas below demonstrate how the requirements of the Policy for undergraduate students can normally be met. The timings of these meetings can be adapted to fit programmes running on different annual patterns and of differing lengths. Beyond this, students can request *additional* meetings with their Advisor which will be arranged within a reasonable time.

Undergraduate Programmes	
Year 1 Meeting 1 (within first two weeks of the start of Semester 1)	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and confirm unit choice/registration and advise as necessary Explain the Advising system - how it supports students in the normal course of academic personal and professional development; how the referral role works to help support students through particular

	<p>difficulties; how the Advisor is a student's first point-of-contact within the School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that effective Advising is a partnership between Advisor and student where the student must also fulfill their responsibilities • Introduce the range of student support and development opportunities at the University of Manchester • Explore with the student their achievements so far, their hopes for University, and what ambitions they have after their degree
Year 1 Meeting 2 (before the end of Semester 1)	<p>Settling in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaffirm that the Advisor is first point of contact on all matters relating to a student's general academic experience and performance • Discuss how the student is settling into university life • Highlight the range of opportunities available in Manchester, and discuss what might be of interest to the student • Review student's potential careers, and any plans for work placements, internships, <i>etc.</i>, in the vacations
Year 1 Meeting 3 (towards the end of Semester 2)	<p>Your Studies and Personal Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Semester 1 overall experience and progress and discuss the student's progress in Semester 2 • Discuss feedback on units taken in semester 1 • Discuss marks from Semester 1 assessments • Discuss unit choice process and options for next year • Reflect on the development of graduate skills and attributes • Remind students of the range of support and development opportunities at Manchester • Recommend students to the Careers Centre drop-in service.
Subsequent years of study Meeting 1 (Semester 1)	<p>Planning for the Year ahead, and beyond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check unit choice/registration and advise or refer to local specialist as necessary • Review overall academic progress on the programme to date, including discussion of feedback and marks for all units from the end of previous session • Academic planning (including balancing of students' extra-curricular work and commitments) • Reflect on the development of graduate skills and attributes • Recommend students to the Careers Service • Remind students of the range of support and development opportunities at Manchester
Subsequent years of study Meeting 2 (Semester 2)	<p>Year 2: Thinking about your Studies and Progress Final Year: Transition to Graduate Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review academic progress to date including feedback and marks for Semester 1 work from all units • Discuss and confirm unit choice (Year 2) • Reflect on the development of graduate skills and attributes • Recommend students to the Careers Service.

Postgraduate Taught Programmes	
Meeting 1 (within first two weeks of the start of Semester 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the role of the Advisor • Explore what the student aims to achieve during their degree and highlight the opportunities available to them • Discuss the content of the programme, including details of any optional units and when the choices need to be taken • Confirm the various other sources of Student Support available at the University
Meeting 2/3 (start of Semester 2) <i>(Meetings should continue as appropriate to the Programme)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss an overview of the student's progress including the feedback on any units taken in the previous semester. • Discuss the next stages of the programme • Discuss/confirm options, ideas and arrangements for dissertation supervision • Encourage reflection on the development of skills and attributes, and signposting the Careers Service as appropriate

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Part 3: Advisor 'toolkit' and online resources

To be worked on by the TLSO following approval of the policy

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