



Academic Advising Charter

The Advising Council of the University of Saskatchewan





An Academic Advising Charter for the University of Saskatchewan

The University of Saskatchewan Academic Advising Charter defines the academic advising experience that the university aims to provide students, along with the roles to be played by designated academic advisors – including college advisors, departmental and program advisors, faculty advisors, and student peer advisors – and by the students they advise and support.

Advising is an integral part of the teaching and learning mission of the University. Broadly construed, advising involves the offering of well-informed guidance that can be imparted formally or informally; in person or via technology; and it can take academic or non-academic forms. In addition to understanding advising as a form of teaching and learning, another guiding principle is that advising always starts with a holistic appreciation of the student as a whole person. For that reason, much advising involves a blend of academic and non-academic advice. Academic advising can, however, be distinguished from other allied forms of advising on campus – tutoring and learning support, or career, psychological, financial, disability, or legal counseling, etc. – by the fact that the primary focus of academic advising is on student success as revealed primarily in their academic progression towards identifying, pursuing, and completing their intended academic program and achieving their academic goals.

The Academic Advising Charter is modeled on the University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter¹, with particular focus on the references to academic supports embedded in that document:

Honouring this commitment requires that the University help students to select programs appropriate to their particular abilities and preparation. Where better preparation is required, the University will counsel students on how they might obtain this preparation. The University will ensure that students understand their commitments and responsibilities—as identified in this Learning Charter—as a guide to how they can best achieve success in their learning pursuits. Honouring this commitment also requires that the University provide appropriate academic and other supports to students who experience various challenges to their learning, including challenges of a cultural, social, psychological, or physical nature.²

1 A Learning Charter for the University of Saskatchewan was approved by University Council on June 17, 2010, and can be found online at http://www.usask.ca/learning_charter/.

2 Learning Charter, p.6.



Core Academic Advising Goals

The core goals of academic advising are:

- to help students to identify and understand their own aspirations and aptitudes;
- to define and refine their academic and career goals;
- to take maximum advantage of their prior learning experiences; and
- identify their most effective and efficient route to academic success, degree completion, and a future career.

Commitments and Responsibilities

Students

Academic advising is an aspect of the broader learning partnership, in which students' commitments can be summarized as "Learn Actively, Think Broadly, Act Ethically, and Engage Respectfully."³ Students, academic advisors, faculty mentors, and the institution at large are the four key players in the academic advising process. "While all three roles are important, the role of the learner is most fundamental to the learning partnership."⁴

Students are responsible for seeking the advice and support that they need, when they need it.

As partners in the advising enterprise, students are responsible for providing advisors with sufficient personal or circumstantial information to enable them to offer the most appropriate advice.

Students are free to accept or reject academic advice or offers of support, but (except in cases where the advice can be shown to have been erroneous) they are accountable for their own outcomes.

Academic Advisors

Academic advice is imparted by a wide representation of the campus community. At the core of advising activities, however, there exists a formal role on campus for the group of academic services specialists known as "academic advisors". The University of Saskatchewan is "a unique community of learning and discovery, where people can embark on a process of development through which they grow, create, and learn, in a context characterized by *diversity*."⁵ Academic advisors will honour and embrace this diversity – of academic programs, of ways of knowing and learning, and, above all, of the individual learners they encounter.

3 *Learning Charter*, p.3, "Students".

4 *Learning Charter*, p.3, "Students".

5 *Learning Charter*, p.1: "Our Learning Vision".



Academic advisors will help students choose the academic path that best aligns with their individual aspirations, aptitudes, and prior learning experiences, and which offers the most effective and efficient route to academic success, degree completion, and a future career. In professional colleges, academic advisors also share in the responsibility of communicating the standards of the profession. Trained student peer advisors assume a supporting role, delivering carefully delineated advising assistance under the direction of professional academic advisors within a college.

“The University of Saskatchewan offers a diversity of academic and professional programs that is matched by few other institutions of learning.”⁶ No academic advisor can be expected to master the academic standards and regulations pertaining to all of the university’s many programs. Academic advisors will, however, have sufficient training, experience, and expertise (including awareness and understanding of relevant university and college policies) to provide timely and accurate advice appropriate to their particular advising role.

Academic advisors will also know the limits of their particular advising responsibilities and expertise, and know when, where, and how best to direct students to the specific advice and support they need.

Faculty mentors

Faculty play a key mentorship role in contributing to academic success by helping (particularly senior) students identify disciplinary and interdisciplinary degree pathways as well as providing guidance on potential academic and/or professional career trajectories. The role of faculty mentor is not limited to department heads and/or undergraduate chairs but rather, extends to all faculty as teacher-scholars.

The Institution

In keeping with the University’s commitment to provide appropriate academic and other supports to students, the institution will ensure that sufficient staff with the necessary skills are available to provide timely and accurate academic advising attuned to the individual needs of each student, along with the technological support necessary to extend the availability and enhance the quality of advising.

In the event that a student has followed documented advice from a designated academic advisor that proves to have been incorrect and to have had adverse consequences that could reasonably have been foreseen, the institution will work with the student to rectify the error and, if possible, minimize any negative academic impacts, while honouring the commitment to fairness and equity for all students.

6 *Learning Charter*, p.1: “Core Learning Goals”.