

Academic Advising (a practical session)

CARD Masterclass

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Introductions, agenda and explanations



What do we hope to accomplish?



What do you need out of the session?



What can be accessed later?

How to join in today



Listen



Discuss



Write



Think



Reflect



Read

The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of a library. On the left, there are tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. In the center-right, a person is visible, slightly out of focus, appearing to be reading a book. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting an indoor setting with windows. The overall composition is clean and professional, with a focus on education and learning.

Project from the
Institute of
Teaching and
Learning

PROJECT SUMMARY



This project was prompted by the inconsistent experience of academic advising across the University of Manchester that currently exists. Both students and advisors sometimes struggle to align the potential found in their relationship for significant coaching, support and reflection with the structure, training and tools currently available.

THE PROJECT PURPOSE



THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE

This project sought to identify specific tools, support and resources needed by students from their academic advisors to better understand, reflect and take action on issues or gaps in their understanding and effectively use the academic advising process to support their learning. Similarly, advisors contributed their own experiences and needs to the project. This project used mixed methods approach including survey questions, in-depth interviews and virtual conversations. It sought to centre the student voice and experience of the academic advising process.



THE PROJECT OUTCOME

This project is specifically focused on the support advisors can give to support student learning and, while other topics may arise, the recommendations will focus on that area. It aligns itself with the current work on benchmarking the academic advising experience at Manchester, and seeks to ensure that both students and staff are successful.

Highlights

Here are some direct quotes from academic advisors who responded to the project's surveys.

“Academic Advisors are expected to provide support in three major areas, academic, wellbeing and employability, as set out in the current Academic Advising Toolkit. In which of the following areas do you feel most confident providing support? What makes you feel this way?”



Academic issues, physical and mental health issues

As a teaching-focused member of staff, my knowledge of the department in which I and the students work and the courses which the students take, as well as my own experience of working in academia and my subject help me provide support for academic issues. There are also some fantastic library resources available through MyLearningEssentials - so when students have an academic work issue, I can often find a relevant resource for them here. I have trained as a first aider and mental health first aider, outside of work, and there are also some fantastic resources available through the University Counselling service website - so when students have a health or wellbeing work issue, I can often find a relevant resource for them here.



Academic issues and emergencies

For other aspects I must draw on my personal and general and specific experiences and ad hoc knowledge. I am trained as an academic and not a therapist or career advisor, although whilst over the years my experiences are not insubstantial, they can only provide a basic level of support for the other categories,



Academic issues

We receive no training on wellbeing, physical or mental health counselling, financial training, career advising or other issues.

A consensus, therefore, seemingly exists between advisors and advisees where pastoral care is concerned; there is neglect on both ends. Advisors display a high level of discomfort in tackling social and emotional matters, quoting lack of expertise on areas other than academia, decentralized resources and incomprehensive framework for academic advising beyond academia whilst students find themselves **unable to form deeper level relationships with their academic advisors that would enable them to seek guidance on social and emotional matters.**



01

02



This issue is further exacerbated by time constraints; as the main point of contact for many students, academic advisors are pressed for time to dedicate to their advisees. The frequency of advisor-advisee meetings is alarmingly low, with 46.8% students reporting to have met their advisors only once or twice a year **while 23.4% reporting to never having met their advisors.**

This culminates in high student dissatisfaction with the academic advising program; **62.79% of student are extremely and somewhat satisfied with their academic advisors;** while 27.9% are extremely and somewhat dissatisfied.

The placement of the advisor as the main point of contact for students with ranging guidance needs gives rise to a variety of issues. A prominent issue arising from this situation is isolation, with academics noting a lack of access to other's expertise and students highlighting a need for a stronger relationship.



03

Potential ways to engage with advisees

Confirm

- (ensure you understand the issue or question)

Connect

- (link student to relevant support)

Coach

- (set up action plan or other active response to situation)

Scenario 1

Alex is first year student who has come to see you and tells you they are struggling to cope with their academic work, in particular the changes to the way students are being taught with more online content. They have failed their first summative submission and have not submitted some coursework for another unit.

What would you do?

Scenario 2

- ▶ Leo is a first year student who appears to be struggling with his academic work: he has failed two exams in the recent assessment period and has been absent from some timetabled sessions. Other members of staff have voiced ongoing concerns regarding his timekeeping, poor attendance and general disinterest. You have requested a meeting to find out what is going on and try to offer support. This is the second arranged meeting since Leo forgot to attend the first one.
- ▶ On meeting Leo you are struck by his unkempt appearance, poor hygiene and general withdrawn demeanour which is a far cry from the enthusiastic student you remember from earlier meetings. Following a brief discussion, Leo discloses he is struggling with his flatmates and their 'uptight' attitude to kitchen cleanliness, finding it hard to concentrate on his studies. He later cries and confirms he is finding life difficult since his father recently phoned him to confirm his parents' marriage is now over and he is moving out of the family home.
- ▶ What would you do?

Sentence Starter Exercise #1



1) Using the [Jamboard](#), add your own “starter” sentences for the CONFIRM conversation around the scenario (feel free to use the examples as prompts)



2) If you see one that sounds just right, add a (+) on a post-it nearby



3) Write any comments or questions in the chat

Sentence Starter Exercise #2



1) Using the [Jamboard](#), add your own “starter” sentences for the CONNECT conversation around the scenario (feel free to use the examples as prompts)



2) If you see one that sounds just right, add a (+) on a post-it nearby



3) Write any comments or questions in the chat

Scenario 3

- ▶ Ellen meets with you as her Academic Advisor during her second year. During the meeting she tells you that she has just been diagnosed with anxiety. In addition to this, she highlights that her marks have been falling in the work she has submitted. The feedback consistently highlights spelling errors, incorrect sentence construction and an overall disjointed nature of the work submitted. She also tells you that she struggles with reading the course unit texts and is unsure what she needs to focus on.
- ▶ What would you do?

Scenario 4

- ▶ Yingpei has failed all of the Semester 1 exams and from looking at coursework marks, he is clearly struggling. In a previous meeting, you had made recommendations to apply for mitigating circumstances and to contact his GP and the Counselling Service for support. During the meeting you had shown Yingpei the resources on the Counselling Service website and together you agree some actions to take. You are concerned that Yingpei may be depressed which is why you had also recommended that he sees his GP.
- ▶ In a follow-up meeting two weeks later, Yingpei admits that he has not taken any of the steps that you had recommended. He feels embarrassed and uncomfortable talking about his health with others. He also tells you that he is feeling increasingly isolated and lonely in his private accommodation.
- ▶ What would you do?

Some questions that may help get started

- ▶ How are you doing in your degree? Does it feel like a good fit?
- ▶ How is your semester going?
- ▶ Which classes did you like the most last semester? The worst?
- ▶ What kind of careers can you see yourself doing with your degree?
- ▶ Have there been any particular difficulties you have encountered?
- ▶ What courses have you been thinking about for next semester?
- ▶ Are there any special situations that we need to consider in planning your educational program? For example, do you have a job? Are you responsible for your family? Do you have other obligations?
- ▶ Have you thought about ways to add value to your degree through volunteering, internships, Stellify?
- ▶ Are you aware of the resources available to you? (counselling, career service)
- ▶ What questions do you have for me?

Follow up

After this session, please have a look at:

LinkedIn Learning (a number of resources around coaching as a method)

The AA toolkit

(Faculty specific BB space)

Some useful links

- ▶ [Student facing wellbeing links](#)
- ▶ [Advisor facing links on signposting and the advisor role](#)
- ▶ [Library resources \(MLE\)](#)
- ▶ [Careers website](#)
- ▶ [Stellify Crib sheet](#)
- ▶ [Counselling website and appointment system](#)
- ▶ [Supporting students training](#)
- ▶ [Occupational health](#)
- ▶ [Supporting students \(ready made resources\)](#)