

Title:	Policy on Advising
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Date:	3 June 2014
Circulation:	Teaching and Learning Group
Action Required:	To approve the policy and agree the indicative forward plan for consultation and implementation.

Background

1. At its meeting in March 2014 the Teaching and Learning Group received and endorsed the report prepared by Professor Reece following his "*Review of Advising at The University of Manchester*".
2. One of the outcomes from the discussion at that meeting was that an Action Plan be produced to assist in the implementation of the recommendations from the review. The Action Plan recommended "*the production of a separate policy document and associated guidance that are focused on academic advising*".
3. The draft Policy on Advising and associated guidance is attached here for the consideration and endorsement of TLG members. It should be noted that the guidance will be supplemented by a 'toolkit' for Advisors that will be developed over the summer. Members are asked to consider and approve the policy and the indicative forward plan for its implementation as follows:
 - Draft policy and guidance to go to TLG on 9 June for consideration/approval.
 - Consultation to be carried out over the summer and into semester 1.
 - Advisor toolkit to be developed over the summer.
 - Approved documentation to go to Senate in either December 2014 or February 2015.
 - Implementation from October 2015.

University of Manchester

Policy on Advising

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Version 1.1

Prof Richard J. Reece

Associate Vice-President for Teaching, Learning and Students

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 should be read in conjunction with the accompanying guidance document and online resources.

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.

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;
- 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.

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 that need resolution.

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 guidance and support to help fulfill their responsibilities in this role.

4.5 Each Advisor will make contact with their students at least twice per semester, and at least one

of these contacts should be through a 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.

- 4.6 Students are permitted to change their Advisor. They are not required to give a reason for their request, and 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.
- 4.7 If an Advisor feels that their role is compromised, perhaps due to a conflict of interest, they should ask the Head of School, or the Senior Advisor on their behalf, to provide an alternative advisor to the student. Schools should provide clear, transparent information to students on how to change their tutor.
- 4.8 Schools must decide how they will implement the Advising role and must articulate this to their students in Student Handbooks.

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 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 one-to-one meetings between a student and an academic member of staff which are scheduled at regular points during the academic year.

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*¹, 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 joint honours programmes will be expected to have at least one Advisor from both of the areas of study that contribute to their award, and students on clinically-based programmes may also have a Clinical Advisor.

Document control box	
Policy / Procedure title:	Policy on Advising
Date approved:	
Approving body:	TLG/TLMG/Senate

¹ For further information about these roles please see the guidance that follows.

Implementation date:	
Version:	1.1
Supersedes:	Policy on Personalised Learning
Previous review dates:	N/A
Next review date:	tbc
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations / Policies	N/A
Related Policies:	
Related Procedures and Guidance:	
Policy owner:	Louise Walmsley, Head of Teaching and Learning Support
Lead contact:	Emma Hilton Wood, Head of Academic Policy, TLSO

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Guidance

Part 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Definition of an Advisor

An Advisor is an appropriately trained or 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 development throughout their academic careers, 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 listen and offer students confidential 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.

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 provide advice on overall academic progress, careers, health issues, *etc.*

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 confidential 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 be able to change their Advisor should they so wish.

Frequency of meetings

Advisors will meet with their students at least twice a semester, at least once by means of a face-to-face meeting. Students should be proactive in setting up any further meetings that are considered necessary. The Advisor meeting of a student's degree programme, at which student attendance is compulsory, will be arranged by the School and should be held within a maximum of two weeks post-arrival. 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 qualified and experienced 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 personal tutor system within the academic unit (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.

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

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 monitor the effectiveness of the Advising system, collating student feedback on their experience of Advising, and submitting an annual report on this to the relevant Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee. Any performance issues should be raised with the Head of School.

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

Sequence of Meetings

As an absolute minimum, face-to-face Advisor meetings should take place at least three times during year 1 of an undergraduate programme and at least twice in subsequent years. There should be at least two Advisor meetings for Taught Postgraduate Students. The following table sets out the expected pattern of meetings:

	Welcome Week	Semester 1	Semester 2
Year 1	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
Year 2		Meeting 1	Meeting 2
Year 3		Meeting 1	Meeting 2

Advisor meetings should take place in all years of student enrolment, including study abroad years (or Semesters) and placement years.

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. The policy here is based on one-to-one meetings between the Advisors and their students. It is recognised, however, 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 one-to-one 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)	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <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 difficulties; how the Advisor is a student's first point-of-contact within the School • 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review student's potential careers, and any plans for work placements, internships, etc., 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.
Year 2 and 3 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
Year 2 and 3 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