

Tips for Advising New Students

1. Setting the Tone

Most new students will not know what to expect from a faculty advisor. Some will be looking for an academic mentor, while others may see their new faculty advisor simply as a successor to their high school guidance counselor. Your first meeting with your advisees is an opportunity to set their expectations for the advisor/advisee relationship. Let them know what you expect from them and what they can expect from you.

3. Availability

It is important to be available to your advisees. During your first advising meeting, talk to your advisees about how they can get in touch with you and encourage them to do so. Consider giving them a handout (or sending an email) with your email address, office location, and office hours. If your advisees know the best way to reach you, they will be much more likely to contact you when they need you.

4. Following Up

Many first-year students report that they do not see their faculty advisors between Orientation and Advising Week, more than two months later. Since both of these meetings are typically focused on preparing for registration, there is often very little time left to discuss a student's interests and long-term goals, or to talk about support services and opportunities that may be helpful to them. Consider reaching out to each of your new-student advisees in September or early October to see how they are doing. Invite them to make an appointment with you or to stop by an office hour. Not every student will take you up on this offer, but for some students it will serve as needed encouragement connect with you about any issues or questions that may have arisen since the beginning of the school year.

5. Advisors can assign homework too

Only so much can be accomplished in advising meetings, so do not be afraid to assign your students advising-related assignments, either as preparation for a meeting or as part of the follow-up to a discussion. For instance, a student interested in a certain major might be asked to look at the requirements prior to their next meeting with their advisor.

6. Help guide students by making referrals and introductions

New students are typically unfamiliar with many of our campus resources. Moreover, even if they know that a resource exists, they may not know how to access it or may not feel that it is intended for them. Encourage new students to take advantage of all of the resources available to them and help them locate relevant websites, email addresses, and phone numbers. When appropriate, consider walking with them to help them find an office's location on campus.

7. Placement Exams and Checking Current Enrollments

Students were offered the opportunity to take placement tests during summer in math (calculus), chemistry, music theory, French, German, and Spanish. Students who wish to take either a chemistry or

calculus course this fall will need to take the placement exam prior to registration *unless* they have a qualifying score on standardized test (e.g. AP or IB). Students who wish to take a course in a language that they have previously studied will need to take the appropriate language placement exam prior to registering for the course.

Full details about placement exams are available at: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/academic-support/advising-center/placement-exams>

8. You don't have to have all of the answers

Most faculty advisors will have some first-year advisees who are interested in programs and majors that are not out of the advisor's area of expertise. In these cases, the advisor may feel unequipped to answer questions about unfamiliar courses or departmental policies. No advisor is expected to know every detail about the college's curriculum; the most important thing being able to show the student where they can go to find the answers. Some good resources include:

- **College Catalog and Departmental Webpages.** The *Catalog* is the definitive source for information about major and minor requirements. This information is also accessible using the "Courses & Requirements" link on each of academic department's web page.
- **Advising Handbook.** The *Advising Handbook* is a resource for both first-year students and their faculty advisors. For each major it contains a short entry with additional advice for interested students. It can be accessed through the Advising Center web page: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/academic-support/advising-center/advising-handbook>
- **Department Chairs.** In cases where there may be confusion over a requirement—or if a student wants to know what level of class to take (particularly in Math and foreign languages)—the department chair is often the best person to contact. If you have time, you can pick up the phone and try calling them directly, or you might help the student draft an email. A list of current department chairs can be found here: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/dean-college/department-program-chairs>
- **Registrar's Office.** The Registrar's Office is a good resource for procedural and policy questions, as well as the source for all academic forms.

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