Policy on Advising Taught Students

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Effective from 1st September 2024

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1.0   Introduction and Purpose

1.1   This document defines the University's policy on the formalised provision of support and advice, both academic and wellbeing/welfare related, to students during their period of study at Manchester through the Advising role. It applies to students following undergraduate or postgraduate taught programmes. The arrangements outlined herein describe advising that is delivered to students who are primarily on campus. It is acknowledged that different routes of study (for example; programmes or modules delivered primarily online, on a modular basis, or of exceptionally short duration) may require alternative arrangements, appropriate to context.[1] . The expectation is that these will provide comparable levels of support.

1.2   Faculties may approve alternative advising systems that deliver at least an equivalent level of support, but that are more closely tailored to the structures and needs of cohorts in their respective Schools.

1.3   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.

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[1] The advising requirements for distance learning students and students on Transnational Education programmes, will be forthcoming.

1.4   The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all taught students are provided with high-quality wellbeing and academic support through a proactive academic partnership with mutual expectations (the Advising role).

2.0   Scope and Definitions

2.1   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 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. It does not apply to Degree and higher Apprenticeships, who would usually have support provided by Practice Based Tutors rather than Academic Advisors.

2.2   Academic Advising is an essential strand of a range of personal and academic support offered to taught students while studying at the University of Manchester. An Academic Advisor is a personal contact within the student's subject area and provides orientation and guidance within their disciplinary culture and context. Advisors are expected to be aware of and liaise with as appropriate the other sources of general and specialist support available to students throughout their academic journey including, for example, the School's Student Hub, the Disability Advice and Support Service (DASS), the Counselling Service, the Advice and Response Team, ResLife Advisors etc.

2.3   The Advising role encompasses the full range of the student experience, including but not limited to:
a)   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;
b)   Wellbeing and welfare support: e.g., encouraging proactive, preventative action, as outlined in step 1 of the [Stepped Care Model](), such as signposting to self-help resources on the [Student Support website](), in particular, promoting the [University's Six Ways to Wellbeing](); [Counselling Service self-help and other services](); providing a point of contact and gateway to appropriate services for students experiencing personal difficulties;
c)   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;
d)   Aspects specific to any clinical training requirements.

3.0   General Principles

3.0.1   Every taught student (both undergraduate and postgraduate) will be allocated at least one named academic by each School contributing substantively to their degree programme. The named academic in the school which owns the programme will adopt the role of academic advisor. 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 but this is not a requirement).

3.0.2   Each School/Division will identify at least one Senior Advisor or advising lead, normally covering both UG and PGT students, whose role is to oversee and coordinate the Advising function and act as first point of contact for queries from Advisors that need resolution.

3.0.3   It is acknowledged that there are various different PGT routes of study, including full-time, part-time, modular, etc. so arrangements for Academic Advising may not be identical for all modes of study.

3.0.4   Implementation of the Policy on Advising may 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 or equivalent information for students.

3.0.5   Each School must:
   a)   Ensure that, all reasonable efforts are made for the same academic member(s) of staff to take responsibility for a student for the duration of their programme, to build relationships and improve personal rapport over time; *
         * Where Schools diverge from this practice, there must be a clear pedagogic rationale, and evidence that students are happy with it in practice. e.g. some programmes have students change from Academic Advisor to Project Supervisor at the start of Year 3, with students being happy with the arrangement. It is acknowledged that, some cases (e.g. patterns of leave, periods of sabbaticals or colleagues leaving their role), may mean that students do not retain the same Academic Advisor for the duration of their programme, but the ideal situation would be for this to happen. Where continuity is not possible (e.g. patterns of leave, periods of sabbaticals or colleagues leaving their role), it is essential that a clear and detailed handover is provided between Academic Advisors.
   b)   Provide clear, simple information to students about the different types of support available to them within the School and across other areas of the University;

c)   Emphasise to students that attending Advisor meetings when they are arranged is an essential part of their academic development; Schools/Divisions should have arrangements in place to deal with cases where students don't engage with their Academic Advisor (it is planned that the development of the attendance monitoring system will help Schools/Divisions to be better able to keep track of student attendance and engagement and enable non-engagement to be picked up and highlighted at an earlier stage);

d)   Ensure that academic staff are clear about their role and responsibilities as Advisors and have received training, guidance and support to help fulfil their responsibilities in this role. (Advisors should complete the University's online advising training course as a minimum, with any additional training or guidance provided by the School. The expectation is for Academic Advisors to utilise the training and induction material available to effectively equip them to deliver the role. There will be future work in the context of the new student hubs to determine what additional resources will be made available and how that will happen, as well as consideration of future inclusion of academic advising support and information in induction / NAP.)

e)   Ensure that Advising duties are reflected appropriately in the Workload Allocation Model and recognised appropriately in cases for promotion.

3.1   Principles of the Advising Role

3.1.1   Each Advisor will make contact with their student advisees at least twice per semester during each year of study (for UG students), and at least one of these contacts per semester should be in person; this may mean on campus or online e.g. via Teams, but there should be good quality one-to-one communication. The other contact for the semester may be by phone or email or may be offered as a group meeting. Student and advisor can make additional appointments if needed. Advisors should take the initiative in arranging an initial Advisor meeting for first years in welcome week or as soon as is practical thereafter. (Please refer to 3.2: Timetables and Agendas for Advisor Meetings in the Guidance on Advising for expected patterns of in person/one-to-one meetings).

3.1.2   The Advising role should:

a)   Be undertaken by an appropriately trained member of academic staff (see paragraph 3.0.5d);

b)   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);

c)   Ensure that students are well supported, academically and in relation to wellbeing, recognising that specialised services, particularly relating to employability and wellbeing/counselling/other support services, also have

important roles to play in delivering this; attempts should be made to ensure that loops are closed when wellbeing or other issues have been identified;

d) 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; (please also see the Academic Advising Model);

e) Be delivered consistently and be available to all UG and PGT taught students;

f) 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;

g) 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 3.1.1;

h) Be monitored for quality as part of the continuous monitoring process;

i) Please also refer to the Role of the Academic Advisor in 3.1.1 of the Guidance on Advising.

3.1.3 Advisors are not expected to be the only point of contact for academic and wellbeing issues, nor to be experts in all these areas, but they should be able to provide guidance, advice and signposting to appropriate services where appropriate (see paragraph 2.3 for examples of services and resources). The individual School's Information, Advice and Guidance and/or Student Support and Wellbeing teams can also be referred to by Advisors for support or advice about or for students.

3.1.4 Advisors are expected to maintain boundaries, e.g. by only responding to messages from their advisees during normal office hours and not giving out personal phone numbers. However, Advisors should be prepared to acknowledge ad hoc requests for guidance from their advisees within a reasonable timeframe. It is recommended that Advisors include out of hours advice signposting information on their email signatures.

3.2 Requesting the Academic Advisor be changed

3.2.1 Students are permitted to request that their Advisor be changed. They are required to provide a clear reason for their request, articulating what the barriers are to a successful relationship with their Advisor. Such requests should be considered by the relevant Head of School (or delegated to the Head of Department/Subject, the Senior Advisor or the School Information, Advice and Guidance team), 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 their nominee, should arrange the necessary transfer. The School Information, Advice and Guidance team 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.

3.2.2   If an Advisor feels that their role is compromised (e.g. they feel the relationship between them and their advisee has broken down or there is a significant 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.

4.0   Supporting documents and sources of support

4.1   Guidance on Advising:
https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=24225

Version amendment history box and Document control box

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1.6	July 2022	Updates to document control box regarding policy owner and lead contact details
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Policy owner:	Teaching and Learning Manager (Policies and Degree Apprenticeships), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS
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