

Academic Advising and Counseling Overview

Academic advising is a “collaborative process in which advisors help students to develop and realize their educational, career, and personal goals” (Kuhn, Gordon, & Webber, Spring 2006). Academic advisors assist students with academic planning and other academic matters such as study skills, grades, test anxiety, and graduation requirements. Academic advisors are typically expected to explain academic policies and processes, educate and monitor students on academic requirements and progress, guide students in planning educational and career goals, and connect students with other university resources. Academic advising is often informational, explanatory and developmental in nature. Faculty advisors also often assume the role of mentor. In addition to advising individual students, academic advisors provide workshops and presentations on a variety of academic-related topics. In postsecondary education, the terms “advising” and “advisor” generally refer to academic advising and academic advisor.

Counseling “helps students overcome personal problems from the past and present that interfere with their academic success” (Kuhn, Gordon, & Webber, Spring 2006). Counselors provide mental health services that enable students to improve and maintain their mental well-being which in turn enables them to meet educational, personal, emotional, and psychological goals. Counselors typically address issues that are often more complicated than those related solely to academics. For instance, counselors help students address relational issues (e.g., roommate conflicts), emotional issues (e.g., physical/emotional abuse), and learning disorders (e.g., ADD). Counseling is often done in a one-on-one or group setting. The terms “counseling” and “counselor” refer to staff who provide personal/psychological counseling and related services.

While there are unique roles and responsibilities for academic advisors and counselors, there are some **overlapping topics and issues** (Kuhn, Gordon, & Webber, Spring 2006). Topics such as personal goals or time management may be addressed by either a counselor or an academic advisor. The table on the following page highlights some of the issues that are unique to each and some potentially overlapping issues. When counselors and academic advisors encounter a situation or issue that is beyond their scope of responsibilities or their ability to address, they will refer students to another appropriate university or community resource (e.g., financial aid, health services). A sample list of issues that may require referral is on the following page.

Sources

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2015). CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education, 9th Edition. Washington, D.C.: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

Kuhn, T., Gordon, V. N., & Webber, J. (Spring 2006). The Advising and Counseling Continuum: Triggers for Referral. *NACADA Journal*, 26(1), 24-31.

International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. Standards for University and College Counseling Services. Available from: https://0201.nccdn.net/4_2/000/000/053/0e8/2017-STANDARDS-10-5-17.pdf

National Academic Advising Association. NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model. Available from: <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

Table 2 Typical issues students bring to academic advisors

Issue	Suggested Primary Responsibility as		
	Advisor	Either/Or	Counselor
Course selection	■		
Register for classes			
Advanced placement			
Drop a class			
Exit institution			
Degree requirements			
Academic probation			
Unfair grade from professor			
Death in family		■	
Time management			
Underachievement			
Mid-life career change			
Decision making			
Academic goals			
Personal goals			
Career goals			
Interpersonal relationship			
Family relationships			
AD/HD			■
Substance abuse			
Eating disorder			
Physical/emotional abuse			
Sexual orientation			
Sexual harassment			
Racial discrimination			
Suicide			

Table 2 above is from page 27, *The Advising and Counseling Continuum: Triggers for Referral*

Examples of situations/issues that may require referral(s) to another resource

- Pre-med major is failing math and chemistry
- Student’s grades drop following death of a family member
- Student cries uncontrollably over inability to cope
- Recently divorced parents refuse to help pay for college expenses
- Student cannot study because roommate keeps late hours
- Student does not accept responsibility for poor grades
- Student is having relationship problems with girlfriend/boyfriend

List adapted from Table 3 on page 29, *The Advising and Counseling Continuum: Triggers for Referral*