



# ACADEMIC ADVISING GUIDEBOOK



HAMILTON COLLEGE

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## 1. Advising Mission & Expectations

(From Advising Website; statements approved by faculty Dec 2013 & Mar 2014)

Academic advising at Hamilton helps students make responsible, informed decisions about their intellectual development. Working with a faculty advisor, students craft an educational plan reflecting their particular interests and abilities, and the College's [purposes and goals](#). The plan, which typically evolves over time, balances the freedom of an open curriculum and the breadth of a liberal arts education.

### The Faculty Advisor-Student Relationship

The faculty advisor-student relationship sits at the center of a larger system of formal and informal advising resources on campus, a system that engages students in conversations that transcend mere course selection. Drawing on multiple sources of advice will enable students to make the most of their college experience through a well-thought-out exploration of various disciplines, selection and completion of a concentration, consideration of options for off-campus study, and preparation for life after Hamilton.

For the first two years, until students declare a concentration, faculty advisors help them adjust to the intellectual demands of the College. Once students declare a concentration, they will be advised by a professor in that department or program. Advisors vary in their approaches to advising, but all are eager to see students succeed and to help them toward that success. Although advisors are ready to assist, students must assume major responsibility for their own education when they matriculate at Hamilton. Students must take the initiative to seek out advice, and take responsibility for their educational plans.

### Advising at Hamilton: Expectations & Responsibilities

Advising at Hamilton is designed to help students make responsible, informed decisions about the course of their intellectual development. The advising system incorporates all of the formal and informal [advising resources](#) on campus.

The College supports that system by providing information about goals, regulations, policies, and procedures (e.g., purposes and goals, off-campus study opportunities, the process for declaring a concentration, and each student's progress toward a degree) and by providing resources to support the advising process (e.g., support services and post-graduate planning). The College also provides training for advisors, conducts ongoing assessment of the advising system, and recognizes outstanding advising.

Advisee-advisor interactions primarily will involve discussions to encourage reflection on decisions in academic planning, as noted below. The College expects that over the course of the first three years each student will become self-sufficient and independent in making decisions about the student's educational plans, and that the advisor will facilitate such growth.

The College expects that students will familiarize themselves with:

- [Graduation requirements](#)
- [The College's purposes and goals](#)
- [The process of declaring a concentration](#)
- Options and academic regulations for [off-campus study](#) if they are interested in pursuing off-campus study
- [Support services](#) that are available and how to obtain help
- Their ongoing academic progress toward graduation

Questions about the above topics can be directed to the Registrar's Office or the Associate Dean of Students for Academics, as appropriate.

The College expects that advisors will communicate their availability for preregistration and informal meetings, and that students will make appointments for preregistration planning and for other discussions.

During their meetings, the student and advisor should discuss:

- The student's educational plan, which will evolve over time and should reflect both the student's particular interests and abilities and the College's purposes and goals. The advisor should inquire about the student's plan and provide feedback and advice, as appropriate.
- Courses throughout the College curriculum, including areas of study with which the student is unfamiliar
- Whether or not off-campus study should be included in the student's educational plan
- The reasons for the student's choice of concentration
- The student's progress toward completion of any chosen concentration and minor
- Campus resources that are available to assist with academic, career, and personal concerns, and, when appropriate, the advisor should make recommendations about what service(s) the student may wish to use
- How the student's choices contribute to post-Hamilton career plans

## 2. Advising Load Guidelines

### Who is eligible to advise?

- All tenured and tenure-track faculty who are not on leave during the academic year are eligible to advise that same year.
- Exceptions: Long-term visiting faculty may agree to advise with approval of department

### Guidelines used for determining advising load

- Generally a 20-student max
- Exceptions by consent of faculty member
  - Usually an issue for departments with high numbers of concentrators
- Senior concentrators will count as ½ an advisee
- No more than 8 first-year advisees in the fall
  - First-time advisors will normally have a maximum of four first-year advisees in the fall
- Faculty on leave in the spring semester will not be assigned new advisees in the preceding fall

### Assignment of Pre-Concentrator Advisees

The Registrar's office assigns first-year advisees.

- Students will be assigned advisors who are their first-semester instructors insofar as is possible. Other students will be assigned to faculty who will be teaching introductory courses in the spring, if possible, and will be linked to students' stated interests.
- January admitted students will be assigned to someone who will be one of their instructors in the spring semester.
- Typically, students will remain with their pre-concentrator advisor until they declare a concentration near the end of their sophomore year; however, students have the option of changing their academic advisor at any time.

### Assignment of Concentrator Advisees

Departments handle assignments of concentrator advisees according to their own procedures and guidelines. Some allow students to self-select advisors. In some high-enrollment departments, the chairs may determine assignments to maintain equity in advising load.

- When assigning concentrator advisees, it helps if department chairs try to keep the concentrator advising load lower for faculty who are scheduled to teach FYCs in the fall.

### 3. Advising and the Open Curriculum

Hamilton has offered an open curriculum since 2000. Because there is no fixed set of core distribution requirements, an open curriculum encourages breadth through intentional exploration. Consequently, the success of an open curriculum lies in the ability of students to be actively engaged in their decisions and to consider how their choices address their own and Hamilton's educational goals in the context of their academic planning. This is a big responsibility – how can we engage students in this process?

#### ***General Tips***

##### **For academic advisors:**

- Take time to become acquainted with their advisees
  - Be aware that students arrive at Hamilton with a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, strategies, challenges and expectations. The advising website provides some framework for putting Hamilton students' experiences in context (<https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources/faculty/our-students>)
- Discuss academic and career goals and students' progress towards them
  - Help advisees identify their own passions and goals, and envision their own paths as they balance their personal goals with those of the institution.
  - Help students learn how to set and achieve goals.
  - Act as a supportive critic, guide and ally.
- Be aware of information that students may need and where to refer them.
  - Help advisees learn how the advising system and WebAdvisor works.
  - Have an awareness of issues that affect students' academics and some knowledge about appropriate referrals.

##### **Advisors are *not* expected to:**

- Fill out forms for students
- Register students for courses
- Make sure requirements are completed
- Know requirements for every major
- Make decisions for students

##### **Advisors are expected to encourage students to:**

- Take responsibility for their academic career
  - Think about goals for Hamilton and after
  - Explain their ideas and plans
  - Gain an understanding of a liberal arts education
- Make use of their advisor's knowledge
  - Think about the questions from their advisor
  - Evaluate the advice given
- Show up for the job
  - Schedule appointments
  - Arrive on time and prepared
  - Take time for conversation with their advisor
- Make decisions, be reflective
  - Consider and reconsider goals

- o Decide on courses, concentration, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences
- Take charge of registration matters
  - o Obtain necessary information
  - o Learn and complete all requirements
  - o Register for courses

**Students are *not* expected to:**

- Memorize the college catalogue
- Know immediately all of Hamilton's requirements
- Know the requirements for every major
- Know immediately their career and life goals

## 4. Advising Resources & Faculty Training

### Advising Website

Hamilton's advising website maintains a faculty section to highlight helpful resources to support faculty in their advising responsibilities (<https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources/faculty>). Faculty are encouraged to explore the entire site to become familiar with the various stages in students' educational careers as well as the opportunities and resources available to support them along the way.

### Developing an Educational Plan

As students begin to make decisions and plan their education, you might find it helpful to refer students to the advising website (<https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources>) that pulls together in one place the many resources and opportunities that help build a Hamilton education.

- Academic planning pages are available for all class years. The link for First-Year students is here: <https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources/first-year-students>
- A guide on how to get started in a concentration is here: <https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources/so-you-want-to-major-in>

### WebAdvisor

WebAdvisor is an online tool that faculty use to access all of their advisees' academic records and to clear advisees for course registration. It is also used for faculty to track the enrollment status of courses offered at the College.

### Information from the Registrar

The Registrar's Office maintains a website to assist new faculty with academic advising and other procedural policies. <https://my.hamilton.edu/registrar/faculty-resources>

### New Advisor Orientation & Training

Faculty workshops are offered throughout the academic year to assist faculty with a range of advising matters. Topics are geared towards issues that are likely to arise for a particular time of year. Sample topics are provided below.

#### Late Spring –

- Nuts and bolts session for new advisors.

#### August –

- Nuts and bolts session for new advisors.
- Advising workshop session. Discussion on various general topics such as developing a relationship with new students, developing a long-term educational plan to attain goals (studying off-campus, planning for medical school), advising students from a broad range of backgrounds.

#### Ad hoc sessions during the year –

**Past topics:** handling sticky situations; visiting resource centers on campus; meeting some pre-professional advisors; preparing for meetings to assist with registration; advising for January admits; helping students who are on the fence make decisions about concentrations, internships, study abroad, opportunities for extra-curricular



scholarship, or pre-health professions; discussions with personnel who provide support in different aspects of students' lives (e.g., Career Center, Counseling Center, Health Professions Advising, Opportunity Programs, etc.)

## 5. Advising During New Student Orientation

### The Pre-registration Process

Incoming first-year students will have completed an online summer advising tour in June, during which they will provide information to assist with their academic planning. In the tour students are introduced to the curriculum, and they select a set of twelve preferred courses to take in their first semester. Students will be pre-registered for courses based on their responses and will be notified of their schedules in late summer. Advisors will have access to their advisees' responses to the tour through a link provided by the Registrar Office.

*(January Admit students complete the tour in the fall semester and are registered for spring courses during the regular course registration period in November)*

### New Student Orientation

During new student orientation advisors meet with their first-year advisees as a group, and then individually to begin the academic advising process. If students wish to make changes to their preliminary schedule they may do so after meeting with and obtaining approval from their academic advisor. **Advisors should clear all students after their individual sessions** to indicate that the meeting has taken place – even students who do not wish to make changes to their schedules.

### Schedule Changes during Orientation

- Advisors should make sure students understand how to check if a course is open or closed in Webadvisor.
- Students who wish to make changes to their schedule will need to come to the Registrar's Office in the Elihu Root House.
- During Orientation:
  - If the course a student wants is OPEN, they will not need any signatures on the Add/Drop Form, but will still need to complete the form (available online at the Registrar's site) and bring it to the Registrar's Office to be processed.
  - If the course a student wants is CLOSED, or they do not have the listed Prerequisites, they will need only the instructor's signature on the Add/Drop form and will need to bring the form to the Registrar's Office to be processed.
  - Students will need departmental approval and signatures on Add/Drop forms for changes in levels/sections for Math, Chemistry, and/or Foreign Language courses.
- Once classes start students will need signatures from their advisor and instructors of the dropped and added courses in order to make changes.
- During the first full week of classes, students can continue to check for newly opened seats on WebAdvisor, as other students drop courses throughout the first days of classes. If a seat opens up that they want, they can come to the Registrar with the appropriate forms and signatures to add it.

## 6. Important Advising Issues by Class Year

*Below is a brief summary of important details for each class year. Please refer to Hamilton's advising website for more in-depth information on a variety of matters that students will face in their four years at Hamilton (<https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources>).*

### 6.1. **First Year**

#### Summer Pre-registration & Fall Orientation

- Incoming students will learn about the curriculum as part of an online summer advising tour in June; students will select a set of twelve preferred courses for possible fall enrollment.
- The Registrar, working with Tara McKee (Associate Dean of Students, Academics), Phyllis Breland (Director of Opportunity Programs), Leslie Bell (Pre-Health Advisor), and feedback from other relevant faculty about placement, will enroll students in courses in July, giving each student as many of their top choices as possible.
- Students will be assigned advisors who are their first-semester instructors insofar as is possible. Other students will be assigned to faculty who will be teaching introductory courses in the spring, if possible, and will be linked to students' stated interests.
- Students will meet advisors during orientation to discuss and approve, or consider changing, their fall course schedules, as well as to discuss a longer-term educational plan.
- There is a short period during which students can change their schedule (see Section 5 above).

#### January admitted students

- Some first-year students matriculate in January. These students will complete an online advising tour in the fall to begin learning about Hamilton's curriculum and to select courses.
- They will be assigned to academic advisors who will be one of their Spring term professors.
- Deadlines for completion of degree requirements are similar to those for students who matriculate in the fall: Declaration of major, QSR, and PE requirements are to be completed by the fourth semester of attendance, the writing requirement by the sixth semester.

#### Introducing the academic advising system

Many faculty will be formal academic advisors to students who are enrolled in their introductory courses and important informal advisors to others. A key step in easing students' transition to college is introducing first-year students to Hamilton's academic advising system. This introduction should include discussions about the following:

- each participant's responsibilities in the advising process (<https://my.hamilton.edu/advising-resources/advising-at-hamilton>)
- the College's educational goals (<https://my.hamilton.edu/educational-goals-and-curriculum>)
- initial steps in forming a student's educational plan
- the use of WebAdvisor and the College Catalogue
- the importance of taking placement exams for math and language study

- planning for off-campus study with staff in the [Off-Campus Study Office](#), including understanding the [requirements](#) for studying off campus

Conversations on these topics usually progress more smoothly and follow more naturally after taking some time to learn about your students' interests, backgrounds, and goals.

## 6.2. Sophomore year

- If students are interested in studying off-campus they should begin planning in their first year or early in their sophomore year with the staff in the [Off-Campus Study Office](#). Students should be aware of the process for transferring credit back to Hamilton from study off campus, which includes submitting a [Transfer Credit Petition](#) and understanding the various [policies](#) for transfer credit.
- Completion of QSR and PE requirements should occur in the sophomore year.
- Students declare a concentration in spring of their sophomore year. They must have completed two courses in their concentration by the end of their sophomore year.
  - January admitted students are given an additional semester, but may declare in the third semester with their classmates, if they wish.
- At the time they declare their concentration, sophomores are asked to reflect on their educational plan to date, in light of the College's purposes and goals, and their plans for the remainder of their time at Hamilton. (See questions below.) Those responses will be available for advisors to review and discuss with their new concentration advisees.
- When declaring a concentration, students will also be asked for feedback on their academic advising experience thus far. (See section below on Assessment.)
- Students work with their concentration advisor in Spring of their sophomore year.
- Following-up on responses to the sophomore reflection survey is a good way to get to know your new advisees.

### **Questions for Sophomores to Respond to When Declaring Concentration**

*(Proposed by Advising Assessment Committee Spring 2014)*

1. What led you to choose your concentration? (such as: particular course(s), career aspirations, personal experiences)
2. (a) Explain how your education thus far has helped you address the College's purposes and goals [see pop-up listing]  
(b) Which of the purposes and goals have you yet to address, and what do you plan to do to address them?
3. Other than completing your concentration, what are your educational plans for your final two years at Hamilton? For instance:
  - Are you planning on studying off-campus? If so, where and why?
  - In what ways are you interested in exploring the connections between your academic coursework and co-curricular applications? (e.g., internship, leadership and volunteer activities, etc.) If so, what connections do you want to explore?
  - How do you think your academic plan will help you achieve your life goals?
  - What departments or programs offer courses you have not taken but that you want to explore?

## 6.3. Junior year

- Completion of writing-intensive requirement should occur in the junior year.
- Many students choose to study off campus in their junior year (over 54%). Planning for this time away and for their return is important to ensure a successful experience.
  - Guide students through completion of college and concentration requirements
  - File for leave of absence in the semester before your planned travel.
- Discuss post-Hamilton career plans
- Encourage exploration of internships or other avenues for co-curricular/extra-curricular opportunities as they relate to educational or career goals.

#### **6.4. Senior year**

- Seniors no longer need signatures on registrar forms such as add/drop forms, but they will keep their advisor of record.
- Seniors, of course, may still want to meet with their advisors to discuss various matters, often including their post-graduation plans.
- Each senior counts as one-half of an advisee for advising load purposes.
- At the end of senior year, advisees provide feedback on their advising experience in their concentration.

## 7. Advising Assessment

In May 2014 the faculty approved a three-year pilot period beginning Spring 2015, during which time sophomores and seniors would complete surveys on their advising experiences. In the fall of 2018 an *ad hoc* Advising Assessment Committee was elected to gather feedback from faculty on the survey tools and propose any changes. Below is the motion that was approved on April 30, 2019 with revised survey tools for both sophomores and seniors.

Motion from the *ad hoc* Advising Assessment Committee regarding the assessment of academic advising.

**Moved**, that the Faculty approve the following assessment tools for sophomores and seniors with the following conditions:

- (1) The assessment tools will be first administered in the 2019-20 academic year.
- (2) The Advisory Committee on Academic Advising (ACAA) with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment will oversee the administration of the assessment tools.
- (3) The ACAA, in consultation with Academic Council, will bring any future revisions of the assessment tools to the Faculty for consideration.
- (4) Beginning in the 2020-21 academic year, the ACAA will be responsible for presenting an annual report at the October or November faculty meeting summarizing the aggregated College results of the assessment tools from the previous academic year.
- (5) The results of the assessment tools will be provided in the aggregate to each department/program along with comparable data for the entire College on an annual basis.
- (6) Beginning in 2021, a new question will be added to the Department Annual Report that will require a summary of the department's discussion about the feedback from the assessment tools from the previous academic year (e.g., in the 2021 Department Annual Report chairs/directors will summarize the conversation the department/program had during the 2020-2021 academic year about the assessment tools that were completed by students in the spring of 2020).
- (7) The assessment tools will be required for sophomores when they declare concentrations and for seniors when they complete course evaluations in the spring term. Grade availability will be delayed if the evaluations are not completed.

FOR SOPHOMORES:







*Open Narrative*

Given your experience with advising at Hamilton—including your interactions with your academic advisor, other faculty and staff, online resources, and other campus resources such as the Career Center:

What is/was the most positive aspect of your academic advising experience?

What can the College do to improve the academic advising experience?

During my first and second years at Hamilton my academic advisor (select all that apply):

- Was the same person
- Changed to a different person at my request
- Changed to a different person because the academic advisor was no longer available
- Changed more than once

FOR SENIORS:



*Student Advising Behavior*

The College expects that students will communicate their availability for preregistration and informal meetings, and that academic advisors will make appointments with their advisees for preregistration planning and for other discussions.

During your third and fourth years at Hamilton your academic advising experience included discussions of:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
Your educational plan in relation to your particular interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your educational plan in relation to the College's purposes and goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Courses throughout the College curriculum, including areas of study with which you were unfamiliar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Whether or not off-campus study should have been included in your educational plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The reasons for your choice of concentration(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your progress toward completion of any chosen concentration(s) and minor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus resources that were available to assist with academic, career, and personal concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How your choices contributed to post-Hamilton career plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How internships, summer research, and other "hands-on" experiences supplemented your educational experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Open Narrative*

Given your experience with advising at Hamilton—including your interactions with your academic advisor(s), other faculty and staff, online resources, and other campus resources such as the Career Center:

What was the most positive aspect of your academic advising experience?

What can the College do to improve the academic advising experience?

For those who indicate a single concentration:

During my third and fourth years at Hamilton my academic advisor (select all that apply):

- Was the same person
- Changed to a different person at my request
- Changed to a different person because the advisor was no longer available
- Changed more than once

For those who indicate two concentrations:

During my third and fourth years at Hamilton my academic advisors for my two concentrations (select all that apply):

- Were the same people
- One or both changed to a different person at my request
- One or both changed to a different person because the advisor was no longer available
- One or both changed more than once

During my third and fourth years at Hamilton, my primary academic advisor:

- Was only one of my concentration advisors
- Was equally split between my two concentration advisors

## Rationale

In May 2014 the faculty approved implementation of two advising evaluation tools (one for sophomores and one for seniors) for a trial period of three years, starting in the spring of 2015. These tools were an initial response to the *Middle States Evaluation recommendation to 'assess faculty advising in ways that will assure strong support of individual student achievement of the College's learning goals,'* which are our eight educational goals. The approved motion stated: "At the end of the three-year trial, a Faculty-elected *ad hoc* Advising Committee shall gather feedback from faculty advisors to determine if the surveys need adjustment. The Committee shall propose a motion to the Faculty to continue with the same survey instruments or to revise one or both of them." The *ad hoc* Advising Committee was elected in September, 2018 (Karen Brewer, John Eldevik, and Ravi Thiruchselvam) and they, along with Associate Dean of Faculty Nathan Goodale and Associate Dean of Students for Academics Tara McKee, conducted an online survey to solicit feedback about these advising evaluation tools from all faculty who are assigned advisees.

The data gathered from the faculty on this first attempt at advising evaluation indicated that the tools were not doing what they were designed to do. Based on the results from the three-year trial period and our assessment of the effectiveness of these tools (a process that is important for Middle States Standard V.5), we propose this motion to the faculty to adopt the revised assessment tools.

The *ad hoc* Committee felt that any assessment should be centered on student experiences with the advising system rather than an evaluation of individual advisors. The Middle States recommendation is to provide the best support of “individual student achievement” not *assess individual faculty advisors*. Any approach we take should support faculty in having continual conversations about advising with other faculty. The Committee also felt that the new assessment tool should mirror language the faculty already adopted about what we think advising should achieve. The language used in the assessment tools was adopted by the faculty in the 2013-14 academic year.

Starting with the 2019-2020 academic year, the set of tools (one for sophomores and one for seniors) will be administered. The expectations are that the results from these tools be compiled by department/program and shared with the chair/director in addition to aggregate data for the College. Then, chairs and directors will be responsible for having discussions with faculty about the results, comparing the aggregate data to College averages, and reflecting on how to improve, with a summary of those conversations explained in the yearly Department Annual Report.