

Advising Tips

First and foremost, remember throughout the year to be a proactive adviser. Reach out to your students. Make the effort to spend time with them. Past advising evaluations indicate that students are tremendously appreciative of responsive, accessible advisers.

Admissions Folders and Family Letters

For more information about your students, please feel free to visit the Freshman Dean's Office to read admissions folders and family letters. Ms. Karen Modell will check out the files for you. Please return the files to the third floor to an FDO staff member when you have finished.

Family letters, written by a student's parents or guardians, describe from the family perspective, what the transition to College might be like for a student. Not every family contributes a letter, but when they do, they often provide valuable background information and can be a starting point for conversations with your advisees.

Finally, bear in mind that material in these folders is **confidential**, and is available only to the student, to others with the student's express permission, and to "officers of the University who have an educational need to know." While advisers fall into this last category, please do not remove materials from the FDO or photocopy any part of an admission folder.

Meals in Annenberg

As always, we encourage you to eat with your advisees in Annenberg Hall. It's a great way to catch up with your advisees, meet their friends and roommates and enjoy the atmosphere of Annenberg. When you go to the front desk, the checker will have a sign-in sheet. Please provide your name and HUID, and you will be all set.

Confidentiality

Please bear in mind that no adviser should ever promise a student absolute confidentiality. Advisers will often need to discuss student situations with resident deans or other College officers. In these cases, it is most helpful to talk with the student about why you feel such a consultation is necessary. In that way, the conversation will not be seen as "tattling" or getting a student "in trouble," but as a means to ensure that a student's concern will receive the most expert and helpful response available.

Notes on Add/Drop

- 1) As the add/drop deadline falls on the fifth Monday of each term, it is a good idea to check-in with your students during the opening weeks of October and March: how are they managing their work load? Are classes what they expected? Are they thinking about changes to their class schedule?
- 2) Add/drop forms are available either at the Freshman Dean's Office, or at the Registrar's Office.
- 3) When a student **adds a class**, she needs the signature of the instructor, her adviser and her resident dean. **Dropping a class does not** require the signature of the instructor, but does require the adviser's signature and the signature of the resident dean.
- 4) Except in extraordinary cases approved by a student's resident dean, students must always be enrolled in 4 courses.
- 5) Students should not wait until the deadline to add/drop -- the longer a student waits to add a class, the harder it is to catch up on previous material.
- 6) Remember that some classes will not have midterms or graded essays back to students before the add/drop deadline, so students may need to be proactive to gauge where they stand in particular classes.

UNSAT Reports

As students take midterms, courses will issue "**UNSAT**" reports - notices that a student's progress in the course is not satisfactory. When a student receives an unsat, the resident dean will contact that student, inviting him or her to meet. You will be cc'd on that correspondence, which presents an opportunity to check in with the student:

Some things to bear in mind as you discuss unsats with students:

- 1) **There's no need to panic.** There is plenty of time left in the semester to recover. The important thing is to plan, not panic: what went wrong? What are possible remedies?
- 2) What resources has the course made available? **Office hours, help sessions and study groups are posted on the syllabus, often available online.** Has the student made an appointment with TFs and/or instructors?
- 3) Are there **other distractions or personal issues** that pose additional challenges for the student?
- 4) Counselors at the **Bureau of Study Counsel** can help students with time management and study strategies. Peer tutors are also available at the Bureau.

5) Don't hesitate to contact the appropriate resident if you have concerns or questions about a particular student. The resident deans of freshmen can be reached at 5-1574.

Freshman Parents Weekend

Though Freshman Parents Weekend (October 26-27) can be a great time for students and family to catch up, it can also stir up personal and academic anxieties for students. Parents may express disappointment at what they perceive as a lack of academic progress, or disapproval of new and different extracurricular interests. And, of course, students whose families do not visit may feel left out. All of these are good reasons to check in with your students before or after the weekend.

Midterm Doldrums

As students receive grades on midterm exams and papers, some may be very pleased and encouraged, but some may be disappointed. Your advice can be invaluable in putting these grades into perspective and in planning for the rest of the semester. And, of course, you can direct your students toward sources of help such as TFs, instructors, resident deans and the Bureau of Student Counsel.

This is also a good time to talk to students about getting to know professors. But while many students want to meet with professors, they don't know how to begin doing so. You can help them brainstorm ways to introduce themselves, or how to make use of a professor's office hours.

Preparing for the Winter Holidays

Thanksgiving: Thanksgiving is often a welcome break for our students, but it can, like all holidays, also be stressful. Many classes will have major assignments due either directly before or after Thanksgiving. In addition, some students will encounter difficult situations at home. For other students, traveling home may not be possible.

This is a good time to check in with your students and inquire about plans for the holidays and how to balance the need for rest with their academic demands. In addition, if you are concerned about student staying on campus for the Thanksgiving break, please contact the appropriate resident dean of freshmen.

Winter break: Winter vacation extends from **December 19, 2007 - January 1, 2008**, and students may not realize that the dorms are closed during winter break. Thus, please check in with your students to make sure they have a plan for the winter break. Again, if you are concerned about a student's plans (or lack thereof), please contact the appropriate resident dean.

Final Exam Accommodations

If you have a student who needs to reschedule an exam because of religious obligations: He/She can access the form *Request for Out of Sequence Exam due to Religious Obligations* from the Registrar's website, <http://www.registrar.fas.harvard.edu>, and email it to the Exams Office (fsexams@fas.harvard.edu). The deadline for the *Request for Out of Sequence Exam due to Religious Obligations* is also the last day of scheduled classes, December 18.

If you have students who will require academic accommodations for final exams: please remind them to be in touch with Accessible Education Office *well before their exam dates*. AEO can be contacted at aeo@fas.harvard.edu.

Mid-year Placement Tests

Mid-year placement tests are administered during Intersession. *These placement tests are not required.* However, they may be appropriate for students who wish to satisfy the College's language requirement, which they can do by scoring 600 or above on a mid-year placement test. (Generally speaking, students enrolled in intermediate-level courses, such as Spanish Ca or French Ca, will be a good position to do this).

The mid-year placement tests are also useful for students seeking placement advice on a subject in which they did not take a placement test during Opening Days.

Students planning on taking mid-year placement exams should sign up in advance. They can email fsexams@fas.harvard.edu to register their intent to sit for an exam.

One important note: Please remember that many language courses are indivisible full-year courses. Thus, a student who satisfies the language requirement through a mid-year placement test must carefully consider the question of whether to continue in a language course. *Should a student withdraw from an indivisible, full-year language course at mid-year, he/she will not receive course credit for the fall term.*

Reading Period

Remember that Reading Period is a new experience for all first-year students. Check in with your students about their plans for using their time during Reading Period. Do they have a plan? Are they balancing work and free time? The key to Reading Period is balance. Students cannot reread every word of every assignment since September, nor can they simply "brush up the night before" the exam. If you are concerned about one of your students, please don't hesitate to contact the appropriate resident dean.

Also, please remind your students about the resources available during reading period. All courses have scheduled extended office hours during reading period and exams, and there will be course-wide review sessions for each of the courses. These review sessions

are usually taped and available on the different course web sites. Many of the courses have multiple review sessions with a different topic covered in each session. All of this information will be posted on the individual course web sites no later than the beginning of reading period. Additionally, students may benefit from consulting past exams in their course. Past FAS final exams may be found here:
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~exams/>

Finally, remind students to double-check their exam schedule. It is easy to write down an incorrect time or date, and sometimes exam locations change at the last minute.

Secondary Fields

Some basic information to remember about Secondary Fields:

- 1) Secondary fields are entirely optional, and are not required for graduation.
- 2) Students may receive credit for only one secondary field.
- 3) Students must choose a concentration before filing for a secondary field.
- 4) One half-course may double count for a secondary field and any other requirement (concentration, Core, language citation, language requirement).

Blocking and the Housing Lottery

Inevitably, the housing lottery becomes a major focus of students' attention during February and early March. Many students will find it hard to talk honestly with current roommates about options and preferences, and advisees may need to be "talked through" the steps to approaching difficult issues with roommates or friends. Don't hesitate to speak with the appropriate RDF about students who seem unduly anxious, or who seem suddenly "cut out" of friendship groups as the rooming process begins.

For some students, the House assignment seems all-important. But in reality, all Houses have both advantages and disadvantages. All have caring Masters and Resident Deans, and all have excellent facilities and programs. Some students, disappointed upon receiving their House assignment, will approach advisers to ask for help in arranging an immediate transfer. Please remind them that all students are required to live for a minimum of one year in the House to which they are assigned, before transfer applications can be considered.

Summer Plans

Because Harvard's spring term ends so much later than that of many schools, freshmen may be particularly disadvantaged by waiting until June to think through summer plans.

So encourage your students to consider their summer plans early in the spring term. Some options for students to think about are:

Summer School. Some students look to get ahead or make up for lost credits by enrolling in Summer School. They should bear in mind that Harvard accepts credit **only** for Harvard Summer School courses, or for pre-approved study abroad programs. Students *can* take summer school courses at their home institutions, but these courses will not count toward their Harvard degree. Students should also be aware that financial aid for Harvard Summer School is very limited.

Summer school can also be a good option for students on a pre-med path, and because they do not need Harvard credit for a course to satisfy medical school admissions criteria, students may take courses at Harvard Summer School or at another academically competitive four year American college. However, students should not take more than one of their premedical course requirements during the summer. Additionally, it is important that they not split sequential courses between institutions.

For more on Harvard Summer School, please visit: <http://www.summer.harvard.edu/>.

Study Abroad. To explore options for summer or term-time study abroad, students can drop into the **Office of International Programs (in the basement of University Hall)** Monday-Friday, 9-5; or make a 30-minute appointment to meet with a study abroad advisor by calling 617-496-2722; or attend a study abroad information session listed on the OIP web site calendar of meetings. Students interested in study abroad often benefit from planning in advance, so even if they are only considering study abroad, it is worth consulting OIP. OIP offers partial scholarships to freshmen for summer study abroad, but students should act quickly -- many summer programs and scholarships have a March 1 deadline.

For more on OIP, please visit: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~oip/>.

Internships and volunteer opportunities. The Office of Career Services (OCS) can help students navigate the great variety of summer employment options. . OCS can also help students who have never put together a resume or written a cover letter, or who just need some help shaping the summer.

For more on OCS, please visit: <http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/>

End-of-Year Meetings with Students

May is a good time to schedule wrap-up meetings with students. Possible topics include getting ready for final exams and summer plans. It's also a good idea to sketch out **possible courses for the fall term**. This will help students plan ahead, and help them further consider their concentration decision in the third term.