

Student Guide to the Adviser of Studies System 2023-24

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1. First steps

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students at the University of Dundee will be assigned an Adviser of Studies at the start of their course. This guide is designed to give you an overview of the Adviser of Studies system.

You'll find information about how the Adviser of Studies system works, advice on meeting your Adviser and getting the most out of these meetings, examples of the kind of academic and pastoral issues you might discuss with your Adviser, and information on the wider University support services available to you.

2. The Adviser of Studies system

What is an Adviser of Studies?

Your Adviser of Studies is an experienced member of academic staff from the School or Discipline in which you are studying. They provide a personal point of contact for you throughout your time at University (although your adviser can in certain circumstances change over the course of your studies).

What does an Adviser of Studies do?

As the name suggests, the main role of your Adviser of Studies is to help you understand and navigate your academic journey through the University. A fuller description of some of the things this might involve can be found in the Academic Support section of this guide.

Your Adviser may also be able to help you with wider, non-academic concerns (which in any case are often difficult to separate from academic concerns). Whilst not the primary source of support for these issues, your Adviser will be able to signpost you to the appropriate support services within the University. You can find out more about this aspect of the advising process in the section on Pastoral Support

How does it work?

As an undergraduate or taught-postgraduate student, you will be allocated an Adviser of Studies when you start studying at the University of Dundee. Research postgraduate students are not part of the advising process as their supervisors will fulfil a similar role. You can find out who your Adviser is through [eVision](#). Your School or Division office will also be able to help.

Senior Advisers

Every School is required to have at least one Senior Adviser of Studies. Whilst it is less likely that you'll find yourself in contact with Senior Advisers, you should feel free to approach them if you are having any difficulties with the Adviser of Studies system or with your own Adviser, especially in the event that you wish to request a change of Adviser.

Current Senior Advisers for each School are:

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design - Helen McCoig h.a.mccoig@dundee.ac.uk

School of Business – David Power d.m.power@dundee.ac.uk (undergraduate) and Gizella Marton g.marton@dundee.ac.uk (taught postgraduate)

School of Dentistry - Sarah Jones s.j.jones@dundee.ac.uk

School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law - Patricia Thomson (Principle Senior Adviser of Studies) p.y.thomson@dundee.ac.uk Senior Adviser of Studies for MA and PG tbc

School of Life Sciences - Stephen Land s.c.land@dundee.ac.uk

School of Medicine - Audrey Gregory a.gregory@dundee.ac.uk

School of Health Sciences - Charlie Middleton c.y.middleton@dundee.ac.uk (Post-Qualifying) and Sandy Rolfe (Pre-registration) a.rolfe@dundee.ac.uk

School of Science and Engineering - Helen Langstaff h.langstaff@dundee.ac.uk

3. Meeting your Adviser

The first meeting

Your Adviser or School Office will inform you of arrangements for an initial meeting, usually during Week 0 (Welcome Week). Be sure to check your University of Dundee email account regularly, as most official communication will be conducted this way (although different Schools and Disciplines may make alternative arrangements).

The first meeting is an important one. It gives you a chance to meet your Adviser for the first time and to discuss your module choices. At this stage you may also have some doubts or practical questions about how things work. Your Adviser will be able to help you navigate this transition into university life.

You should also take the opportunity at this initial meeting to agree with your Adviser as to how meetings will be arranged, how you will communicate with each other, and to set expectations and understand what your future meetings and the wider relationship will entail.

Subsequent meetings

You should normally meet with your Adviser a minimum of two times in your first semester of study (or once for part-time students), and then at least once each semester after that. These are the minimum requirements, and some Schools or individual Advisers may offer additional contact.

In addition, you should contact your Adviser through the agreed channels if you feel you need to speak with them outside of your scheduled meetings.

The content of these subsequent meetings will depend on your level of study, progress, and individual needs. Some of the more common topics include:

- Your academic progress, including assessment and feedback.
- Academic planning, such as module choices for future years.
- Opportunities for you to develop academic or graduate attributes, and general career plans.
- Any pastoral issues you may wish to raise.

Group meetings

Some Schools, Disciplines, or individual Advisers may choose to use small group meetings for advising. There can be some benefits to this format for you, not least the chance to build up a small peer support network. However, it's recognised that there may be some issues which you'd rather not raise in front of other people, so do be sure to request an individual meeting in such circumstances.

How to get the most out of your meetings

Effective advising is a partnership between you and your Adviser, so you'll get the maximum benefit out of the relationship if you engage fully and proactively with the process.

Some simple steps you can take include preparing for meetings, thinking carefully about questions you might have or things you might wish to discuss, communicating and staying in touch with your Adviser, and being willing to discuss progress or concerns openly and honestly.

You or your Adviser may discuss keeping records of meetings but be aware of issues around data protection and confidentiality. The latter in particular may mean that your Adviser chooses not to keep a record of confidential discussions you have with them.

4. Academic Support

The primary role of your Adviser of Studies is to guide and support you through your academic journey. Let's take a look at some of the common areas you might discuss with your Adviser.

Programme and module choice: one of the key roles your Adviser has is to help guide you in your programme and module choices. As we've already seen, this will be a key element of your initial meeting. Subsequently, you will probably find it helpful to discuss with your Adviser module options for subsequent years of study. Your Adviser will also be able to support and discuss options with you should you feel that you need to change modules or courses.

Monitoring attendance: Your Adviser will also be interested in your level of [attendance and general engagement](#) with your modules. In most cases, attendance is now recorded automatically using [SEAtS](#), and monitoring will be conducted at School or Discipline level, but your Adviser may be asked to intervene if your attendance drops below the required threshold.

This can be particularly important if you are an international student, as your visa eligibility is likely to be dependent upon maintaining an appropriate level of attendance, but good attendance and engagement is crucial for all students, and you can expect your Adviser to take an interest in this area.

Academic progress, grades and feedback: it's likely that your general academic progress will be one of the areas you wish to explore regularly with your Adviser. This could be anything from understanding how assessment works to making sense of your grades and feedback and seeking advice on how to improve your marks.

Your Adviser will also be a valuable source of support and guidance should you find yourself in the unfortunate position of failing an assignment, facing a resit, or needing to lodge an appeal. It can be difficult to face up to such situations, but engaging openly with your Adviser will give you the best chance of overcoming the situation.

General academic wellbeing: In addition to the specific issues mentioned, Advisers will also be keen to support your general academic wellbeing.

This may, for example, involve enhancing your understanding of how to get the most out of a particular type of learning environment, discussing any difficulties you may be having with tutors or fellow students, or helping you to develop an intellectual curiosity in the discipline you have chosen to study.

5. Pastoral Support

As we've already said, your Adviser's main role is to support your academic progress. However, your academic performance and general student experience may also be affected by non-academic issues, and you may feel more comfortable speaking about these things with your Adviser than with a member of University staff you don't know.

It's important that you feel comfortable enough to speak to your Adviser about these issues but you must also be aware that there will be strict limits as to how much support your Adviser can give you in certain areas. In many cases, their role will be to direct you to the appropriate University support service where you may access professional support for the issue at hand.

Student mental health: If you find yourself suffering from anxiety, stress, or mental health issues, the most important thing is that you talk to someone. If you are comfortable doing so, then discussing in confidence the challenges you are facing with your Adviser may be a sensible choice. They may be able to offer some practical advice on coping with course workload and the pressures associated with specific modules. More importantly though, they will be able to point you towards the appropriate support services within the University.

You may also find the University's [Get help with mental health](#) page useful.

Disability advice and adjustments: You may wish to discuss with your Adviser of Studies any disability which you feel may impact your ability to study successfully at the University. Your Adviser may be able to make some practical suggestions to help you cope. However, if you have a disability which impacts on your work you are strongly advised to register with [Disability Services](#) as soon as possible to ensure that individual support arrangements can be made in a timely manner.

Other pastoral issues: numerous other factors, such as accommodation, finances, outside work, and family or caring duties, may impact on your academic work and your work/life balance. Again, the important thing is that you speak to someone, so your Adviser will be happy to listen to you and to direct you to the appropriate support services.

6. University Support Services

The University has a range of services available to support you in both the academic and pastoral sides of your student experience.

On the academic side, you may find it useful to be aware of the services offered by the [Academic Skills Centre](#), the [Careers Service](#), [English for International Students](#), the [Library and Learning Centre](#), and [Digital Technology Services](#).

In terms of pastoral issues, the Student Services Directorate offers a range of support. The key service to be aware of is the [Enquiry Centre](#), which is located on Campus Green and may also be reached by email (enquiry@dundee.ac.uk). If you contact the Enquiry Centre, your query will be signposted to the appropriate support services.

The [Student Services webpage](#) includes a link to a downloadable *A to Z helpful guide* for students (scroll to bottom of page) which lists up to date information and contact details for every support service offered by the University.

Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) can also offer support and advice in a number of areas related to your course or wider University experience. DUSA is completely independent of the University and exists to represent and support the student body. You can read more about the kind of support DUSA can offer on their [website](#).