

# Faculty Advisor Guide to First-Year Advising

## College of Arts & Sciences

### Fall 2018

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#### **Pre-enrollment**

[Online Pre-enrollment](#), including FWS balloting, occurred July 9-17. Prior to doing so, we requested students to work their way through the [College's New Student Orientation](#) website, which explains the Arts & Sciences degree requirements and gives advice about how to build their first-semester schedule. Once students enrolled in courses, first/second-year deans checked student schedules to ensure that they made appropriate selections, and contacted those students who needed to make changes during add/drop in August. Pre-enrollment should have helped prepare students more fully for their first meetings with you. You can now [check your advisees' schedules](#).

#### **Your First Advising Meeting**

##### **Get to know your advisees:**

- Try to **set them at ease**; many of them are very intimidated when they come to this, their first meeting with a Cornell professor. You could ask a few questions about their experiences moving into the dorm, or extracurricular activities they plan to get involved in, or their families.
- **Tell them a bit about yourself** -- where you're from, how you arrived at Cornell, a bit about your area of research, etc.
- Let the students know the frequency with which you will **communicate** with them, whether you'd like to talk with them before adding or dropping a class, if it's best to make appointments with you or just come to your office hours, etc.
- Then, make the transition of **discussing their fall schedule**.

##### **Accessing your advisee information:**

At [data.arts.cornell.edu](http://data.arts.cornell.edu), you will be able to see a list of your advisees, the date and time you are meeting with each advisee, and information on each advisee, including a summary sheet (address, email, and telephone information; SAT scores; name of high school; and major interest). You will also be able to view the courses in which your advisee has pre-enrolled on their unofficial transcript.

##### **Major interests:**

Given that students will have pre-enrolled in courses when they arrive for their appointment, you will be able to base your discussion on the list of courses your advisee has chosen. You can begin your discussion by asking, for example, how this particular set of courses fits in with your advisee's intellectual interests, potential major(s), and academic goals.

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## **Choosing a Schedule FAQs**

Your advisee should have pre-enrolled in a reasonable schedule, but you may have some questions as you look through his or her courses and talk about major interest(s):

*How many credits should a student take in a given term?*

The minimum number of credits per semester for a full-time student is 12 academic credits, and the average number of credits per semester is 15-16 academic credits. (Academic credits, by the way, **do not include physical education courses, supplemental science and math courses offered by LSC, courses in remedial or developmental reading, service as a teaching assistant, and most NavS, MilS and AirS courses**, except for those cross-listed with an academic department.) For a partial list of courses that do not count for academic credit, see [Courses That Do Not Count](#). If you are in doubt about whether a particular course counts, please consult an advising dean.

*How many courses are in a normal course load?*

Taking 12-17 credits usually works out to be four or five courses. Students who are certain of their course choices and don't want to overload themselves may want to take four courses. Other students will want to sign up for five courses and be able to drop the one they end up liking the least.

*What advice should I give to undecided students?*

You should encourage students to explore their interests rather than thinking about their curriculum as a list of requirements they are trying to check off as quickly as possible. If they explore their interests in the first three semesters, many of the distribution requirements will take care of themselves, and students will likely find a major of interest.

In addition to exploration courses, students must take first-year writing seminars, and students should have a plan for satisfying their language requirement, particularly if they are interested in studying abroad later. The requirements are explained more fully below.

*How do I know which level of course to recommend?*

Keep in mind the level at which the student is entering, and help choose courses accordingly. You can look at the student's high school transcript and AP exam results for clues, and see the [Arts and Sciences advanced placement tables](#). The student may also have taken a Cornell placement test and will either know the results or have an idea of two courses into which s/he might be placed. Last, the student could ask the DUS in the appropriate department about a given AP versus the Cornell course.

*Why was I assigned an advisee with interests outside my discipline?*

If you have an undecided advisee or an advisee who intends to major in a field that cannot take pre-major advisees, please ask questions about the field in which s/he is interested. If you are unfamiliar with the courses in another discipline, show your advisee how to check the departmental website and/or contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies. You could also call the appropriate DUS during the advising appointment.

*My advisee wants to know about grade options. What do I tell him/her?*

Most students take courses for letter grades, but students have the option to take classes S/U, or satisfactory/unsatisfactory, particularly if a course is in a completely unfamiliar

discipline and the student does not want the pressure of taking the course for a grade. Students should keep in mind that S is given for a grade of C- or above, and U is given for anything below a C-. All too often, students believe that S/U means pass/fail, and that is not the case, given that D- is our lowest passing grade. It's also important to note that courses taken S/U can almost never fulfill a major (or minor) requirement, so if your advisee thinks s/he may ultimately use a course toward a major or a minor, s/he should be advised to take the course for a letter grade. The last day to change grading option is October 18<sup>th</sup>.

*My advisee expects me to know about every course at the university. How can I advise him when I may not know about a course outside my own department?*

There are over 2,000 courses in our College alone, so you can't possibly know them all! If s/he wants to learn about a particular course, s/he should talk to someone in the relevant department. If your advisee has more general questions that you can't answer, please call the advising office at 255-5004 to speak with one of the deans. We want you to rely on us as your partner in advising our students.

*What should a first-year student's schedule look like?*

- First-year writing seminar (FWS). About 125 first-year writing seminars spanning almost all departments in the College (and some out-of-college departments) are offered each semester. Your advisee balloted for their FWS during the summer pre-enrollment period. He or she selected five different FWS courses, and the FWS to which s/he was assigned was posted to his or her Student Center in late July. Depending on the outcome of the FWS ballot, your advisee may want to spend part of the first meeting with you deciding whether s/he wants to change sections of his or her writing seminar.
- A foreign language course. Which language course a student selects depends on whether the student is beginning a new language or continuing one s/he began in high school. If an advisee would like to continue taking a language s/he began in high school, s/he should have taken or should take a placement exam. Depending on the language, placement exams are offered online in the summer and/or on campus during orientation. The language placement exam schedule is in the [new student orientation guide](#).
- A course in a possible major. If a course has a section and/or lab, the student needs to remember to sign up for these components as well.
- A course in a discipline s/he has not encountered before and in which s/he is interested.
- Swim test and a physical education class. The student must take the required swim test and sign up for a PE class. If the student cannot pass the swim test, swimming must be the first PE class. PE is not an academic credit so students need to take at least 12 academic credits for the term. Two PE courses are required to graduate.
- Another course of his or her choosing, if s/he wants to begin with five courses rather than four.

*What is a sample course load for a first-year pre-health student?*

- First-year writing seminar (FWS). See above for an explanation for the procedure to ballot for a FWS. If the pre-health student is not intending to major in biology, chemistry, or mathematics, s/he may want to use the first-year writing seminar as a means to explore a possible major interest.
- Introductory biology (usually taken or sophomore year)
- General chemistry (usually taken or sophomore year)

- *Mathematics* (usually taken or sophomore year)
- *Foreign language* (see comments above)
- *PE* (see comments above)

Note: For more in-depth advising on pre-health studies, please direct your advisees to one of our two A&S pre-health advisors -- Naya Sou (advising dean) or Ana Adinolfi (health careers advisor). Pre-health students intending to major in biological sciences can also see one of the advisors in the Undergraduate Office of Biology (Beth Howland, Jeff McCaffrey, or Meghan Gallagher), or Kim Swartz in Cornell Career Services (103 Barnes Hall).

## College of Arts and Sciences Graduation Requirements

The degree requirements, as created and voted upon by the faculty, are as follows:

- **34 courses.** A full course is 3 or 4 credits, a half course is 2 credits, and there are a few 1-credit courses in the music and theatre departments, that aggregate to form half (2 cr.) and full (4 cr.) courses.
- **120 credits, 100 of which must be from the College of Arts and Sciences.** Students sometimes wonder if they have to take 20 credits out of college or if they can only take 20 credits out of college. The bottom line is that the 100 credits in Arts is a minimum number, as is the 120 credits total. Students can take more than 20 credits out of college as long as they take 100 credits within; they can also take all their credits in Arts and accumulate more than 120.
- **Residence:** Eight full-time semesters, unless a student can successfully complete all other requirements in fewer than eight semesters and meet the additional criteria to accelerate graduation as spelled out in the Courses of Study. Study abroad and Cornell's Washington Semester count as semesters of residence.
- **Passing a swimming test and two courses in physical education.** If a student does not pass his or her swimming test, beginning swimming will be the first physical education course. Students with a disability who desire a substitution for this requirement should speak directly with the Physical Education Department.
- **Two first-year writing seminars.** If your advisee received a "5" on the English AP examination, s/he is exempted from one first-year writing seminar.
- **Fulfillment of the foreign language requirement,** which may be satisfied by one of the following options:
  - Passing a non-introductory course in a foreign language at the 2000-level or above.
  - Passing at least eleven credits of study in a single foreign language at Cornell.
  - Exception: Students whose speaking, reading, and writing competence in some language other than English is at the level of native or near native competence or at the level demanded in a 4000-level seminar conducted in that language may be exempt from the college's language requirement. Please contact the advising office for more details.
- **Fulfillment of distribution requirements.** Distribution requirements include the following:
  - Four courses in Physical & Biological Sciences, and in Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning:** Students must take 2 courses in Physical & Biological Sciences, denoted by PBS-AS or PBSS-AS in Courses of Study, 1 Mathematics & Quantitative Reasoning, denoted by MQR-AS, and 1 course that is either PBS-AS, PBSS-AS, or MQR-AS.

**Five courses of 3 or more credits in the following social sciences, humanities, and arts categories\*:**

Cultural Analysis (CA-AS)  
Historical Analysis (HA-AS)  
Knowledge, Cognition, & Moral Reasoning (KCM-AS)  
Literature & the Arts (LA-AS)  
Social & Behavioral Analysis (SBA-AS)

\* The courses must come from at least four of the five rubrics (and may include courses in the major). No more than three of the five courses (including cross-listed courses) may be from the offerings of any one department.

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**Note:** If a student is searching for a course that will fulfill a particular distribution or breadth requirement, s/he can go to [Courses of Study](#) or the [class roster](#) and search the document for a particular distribution code such as KCM-AS or CA-AS. If the code is not followed by -AS, the course does not count toward our distribution requirements. Course offerings in one department may fall under different categories, but a course itself will fall under only one category.

- **Breadth requirements:**
  - Geographic breadth requirement:** One course that focuses on an area or a people other than those of the United States, Canada, or Europe, designated GB in Courses of Study.
  - Historic breadth requirements:** One course that focuses on an historic period before the twentieth century, designated HB in Courses of Study.
  - Notes:** Students may use the same course to satisfy both breadth requirements, designated GHB. Distribution and major courses may overlap with the breadth requirements.
- **Fulfillment of a major.** Students must declare a major by the end of the sophomore year. Major courses take up approximately one third of a student's entire course load. In the junior and senior years, students usually take one half of their courses in their majors.
- **Electives:** Four or five courses (totaling at least 15 credits), not used to fulfill other requirements and not in the major field. (Students with two or more majors are exempted from this requirement). AP credits can be applied toward the electives requirement.
- **Application to graduate:** This form must be submitted in the student's penultimate semester. Students and faculty advisors receive information about this at the beginning of the senior year from the Office of Advising.

*If my advisee wishes to change his/her course selections, how does (s)he do so?*

Your advisee can add or drop courses through his/her Student Center account when the add/drop period begins at 9:00am on Wednesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Advising after Orientation FAQs:**

*How can I follow up easily with my advisee(s)?*

Data.arts lists the [net IDs of your advisees](#) so that you may email them all at once. We suggest that faculty advisors use this list to e-mail their advisees a few weeks before the pre-enrollment period begins for the ensuing semester. This is a very good time to check in with your advisees to see how the current semester is going and also discuss what course selections the student may have in mind for the next semester.

*What are the semester deadlines that my student will have to meet?*

- Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup>: Deadline to add courses freely, after which courses may only be added by petition.
- Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>: Deadline to drop courses freely AND the deadline to change a course grade option from S/U to letter or vice versa. After which, students may petition to withdraw from a course until the end of week 12. If they do, they will receive a “W” instead of a letter grade on the transcript.
- Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup>: Deadline to petition to withdraw from a course.

*What if my advisee has personal or academic problems?*

If your advisee has problems, whether personal or academic, do not hesitate to call one of the advising deans at 255-5004. Often, we will have received phone calls or emails from other faculty members about the student, and we like to have as full a picture as possible so that we can help the student.

If you are concerned about a student’s psychological well-being but feel that you are not in an emergency situation, please call the advising office to let us know.

If you have immediate concerns about a student’s safety and feel that you are in an emergency situation, please stay with the student and telephone Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) directly at 255-5208 (255-5155 after hours), or Cornell Police at 255-1111.

*I’ve been told that I need to keep student records confidential. What are the rules surrounding confidentiality?*

Faculty members and students are often concerned about confidentiality. Confidentiality rules are based on the need to know, and we follow the rules set by FERPA, the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act. If the person to whom you are speaking really needs to know and is authorized to know, then you are allowed to talk to them. Responses to particular parties are as follows:

*Parents or anyone outside the college:* Please refer phone calls from parents to the advising office (255-5004).

*Colleagues:* You may share observations about a student’s behavior, but you may not tell them grades or other items of record unless they need to know, for example, in order to decide whether a student should receive honors or a departmental award.

*Advising deans:* You may tell us anything about a student, including grades. We sometimes need this information in order to appropriately help a student with their personal or academic problems.

The information you receive in return may be more limited than that which you give to medical professionals or advising deans. The reasons for this are:

Medical professions have a stricter code of confidentiality, HIPAA, than anyone else at the university. They are not allowed to divulge information about a student to anyone unless they have that student's express written permission. Advising deans will be able to listen to anything you have to tell us about a student, and we can tell medical professionals about concerns you or we have about a student. We will, however, be unable to divulge any information about a student to a faculty member unless the information pertains directly to a course taught by that faculty member or unless the faculty member is the student's faculty advisor.

*What about Title IX related situations?*

Cornell will not tolerate sexual and related misconduct. If a student divulges any bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual and related misconduct, including gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, stalking, and/or sexual exploitation **it is your "duty to consult"** with the Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator when you become aware of an alleged incident misconduct under policy 6.4. Other than sharing such information with the Title IX Coordinator, faculty and staff members will maintain an individual's privacy to the greatest extent possible.

[Cornell's Title IX website](#) is an excellent resource for learning what to do to support a student. You may also contact one of the advising deans right away if you have questions.

*What online advising resources are there, and what information can I find there?*

- [data.arts.cornell.edu](http://data.arts.cornell.edu)
  - Unofficial transcripts
  - Degree audit information (DUST report)
  - Incoming students' summary sheets listing contact information, high school, test scores, birth date, and net id.
  - Student Records (including high school transcript and admissions essays)
- [Faculty Center](#):
  - Current schedule
  - Photo
  - Transcript
  - Test scores
  - Contact information
  - Pre-enrollment information

For your reference:

- [Courses of Study](#)
- [Class Roster](#)
- [Cornell Code of Academic Integrity](#)

Please remember that if you have any questions, you should not hesitate to contact the advising office at 255-5004.