Oregon State University First Year Advising Syllabus

College/Major Specific Advisor Contact Information

Name:  
Office Location:  
Phone:  
Hours:  
Web:  
Other:  

What is Academic Advising, and what does it look like in your first year at OSU?

You may hear that your advisor is just the “person who tells you what classes to take,” but course planning is really only one component of an advisor’s job. Think of your academic advisor as an interpreter of the OSU environment and a facilitator to your experiences here that relate to your undergraduate degree. As you work your way towards your undergraduate degree, your advisor is a person who helps you make sense of the “3 O’s”: Options, Obligations, and Opportunities related to your academic interests. Your advisor can also help you start to think about how your undergraduate learning relates to career opportunities.

Your academic advisor plays a particularly important role in your first year simply because you will be encountering so much about OSU that is new to you. Because of that, you will be asked to have a face-to-face meeting with your advisor at least once a term during your first year. After that, the frequency with which you meet with an advisor will be determined by your major.

Above all your advisor is a person who is invested in you having rewarding learning experience. Be open and honest with your advisor and trust that they can help you with your decision making.

On Pages 5 and 6 of this document, you will find a term-by-term list of conversation points likely to come up in your meetings with your advisor, but first let’s use the next two pages to define some important academic experiences and requirements at OSU that you need to pursue and comprehend in your first year.

What is the purpose of this document?

When you take a class, the syllabus is an important document that establishes the parameters of the class culture and environment and identifies what you will learn over the course of the term. This First Year Advising Syllabus is designed with similar intentions, but it looks at a bigger picture. Your first year at OSU is a time where you adjust to the culture and academic environment at OSU, and this syllabus outlines important components of that adjustment period. This document includes information that:

- Defines the role of your academic advisor
- Articulates how advising relates to important first year experiences and requirements and gives you some action and reflection tasks for the coming year
- Introduces you to concepts and terminology that are essential parts of the OSU undergraduate experience – for your first year and beyond.
Important First-Year Experiences and Requirements

The four experiences/requirements on the next two pages are really what we call Student Learning Outcomes. You will see the term Student Learning Outcomes or Student Learning Goals frequently as you go through your academic experience. Each course syllabus will have these listed and we even have them for your entire OSU undergraduate experience (OSU Learning Goals for Graduates – see Page 6). The purpose of these goals and outcomes is to let you know in a very direct way what you should be getting out of your OSU first-year experience and what we hope to enable you to achieve. On page 3 and 4, you’ll find a listing of Action and Reflection prompts related to the four experiences/requirements.

I. First Year Skills Requirement in the Baccalaureate Core

An important component of your undergraduate degree at OSU is the Baccalaureate Core (aka the “Bacc Core”). The Bacc Core is OSU’s General Education requirement, and every undergraduate, regardless of major completes it. The Bacc Core is meant to be a progressive experience that spreads out over the entirety of your time as an undergraduate. In other words, there are parts of the Bacc Core that you won’t complete until your junior or seniors years, and there are parts that you definitely need to complete in your first year. The First Year Skills Requirements includes three Bacc Core Categories that you must complete by the time you’ve earned 45 credits at OSU. These categories are designed to help you develop skills in your first need that you will need for year two and beyond.

- **Writing I** – You’ll take WR 121 to meet this category, and the term that you take it is determined by the first letter of your last name: A-G (Fall), H-N (Winter), O-Z (Spring).
- **Speech** - You’ll either take Public Speaking (COMM 111), Argument & Critical Discourse (COMM 114), or Interpersonal Communication (COMM 218) to meet this category. Some majors will specify which class you should take. Typically, you’ll take this class in a term when you aren’t taking WR 121.
- **Mathematics** - You’ll take one Math class to satisfy this requirement. It needs to be Math 105 or a higher. Like Speech, often your major requirements will dictate which class will be used to meet the First Year Skills requirement in Mathematics.

II. Know the Tools and Know the Rules

Over the course of your first year, you’ll want to get very comfortable using OSU’s tools and resources. These could be online tools like

- **MyOSU portal** – a gateway into most OSU online resources as well as other online information that relates to your OSU undergraduate experience.
- **Blackboard** – the “virtual” extension of your classroom where your instructor for a class you are taking may post information relevant to that class.
- **MyDegrees** – OSU’s online degree audit system where you can track your degree progress, plan for your coursework in subsequent terms, and explore degree requirements for OSU’s various academic options.
- **The OSU Catalog and Schedule of Classes** – The official catalog houses information about OSU’s Colleges, Schools, and Departments, and it contains a schedule of classes for the current term and a few upcoming terms.
- **The Career Trail** – A self-directed online career development interactive program developed by Career Services available 24 hours per day. Career Trail provides a resource to jumpstart your career readiness and prepare you for your next steps in the world of employment.

These could also be campus resources like The Academic Success Center, Career Services, the Collaborative Learning Center, the Math Learning Center, or the Writing Center, or perhaps campus resources targeted to support specific OSU student populations like Educational Opportunities Program, Intercultural Student Services, or Disability Access Services.

It is also important over the course of this first year that you get comfortable the “rules” of OSU. This includes OSU’s Academic Regulations (the university rules that govern getting a degree at OSU,) as well as the rules governing academic integrity and community standards. And, depending on your situation, it could also include things like that rules that govern your scholarship or financial aid eligibility and the residential life policies that affect students living on campus.
OSU First Year Advising Syllabus – Draft #4

III. Exploration

Coming to a research university like OSU guarantees that you will have new experiences and new opportunities at your fingertips. It is important that as you make your way through your first year, you keep yourself open to different experiences and opportunities. Your first year really should be a time when you consider yourself as an individual and think about how your interests, values and skills fit with the options you have at OSU. Even if you are pretty set on your academic path when you start here, make sure you take the time this year to consider the various academic options that OSU has to offer. With so many unique academic majors and minors, sometimes the right fit for you could ultimately be something you discover after you get here. Equally important is that you take time during the year to reflect on what your academic experiences inside and outside of the classroom mean to you. In the next section of this syllabus, we give you some ideas.

Part of your exploration might include a consideration of the relationship between your learning and possible career paths you might follow. Career Services, located on the lower level of Kerr Administration, has targeted resources to help first year students like you to initiate the career planning process.

IV. Involvement outside the Classroom

Not all learning at OSU takes place inside the classroom. Think strategically in your first year about what kind of learning opportunities you want to pursue outside of the classroom during your time at OSU and start planning for them.

Examples of this might include

- **Research** (working in lab, collaborating with professor on a project or experiment, creating something new)
- **Study Abroad** (living in another country and taking classes that count towards your OSU degree)
- **Internships** (getting work experience in a field that relates your academic or career interests)
- **Leadership** (seeking out leadership opportunities in student government, the residence halls, a student club, Greek Life, etc.)
- **Community Service** (volunteering for a community or non-profit organization)

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**Action and Reflection on the Important First-Year Experiences and Requirements**

### I. First Year Skills Requirement

**Action:** I will complete my:

- Writing I __________________________ Term
- Speech ____________________________ Term
- Mathematics ______________________ Term

- Yay, I’ve successfully completed my First Year Skills classes!

**Reflection:** After you’ve completed your first year, ask yourself how you see the skills you developed in these three classes contributing to classes you plan to take in the coming years?
II. Know the Tools & the Rules

**Action:** Master OSU’s online resources! Practice using all of the online resources listed in the tools and rules box on Page 2. Identify any that are confusing and make note of them for your next meeting with your advisor.

**Action:** Visit three of campus support offices listed and find out more about how they can support your academic success. If you are finding that specific academic concerns are surfacing for you, write them down so you can discuss them with your advisor.

**Reflection:** At the end of each term in your first year, rate your overall comfort level with accessing and using OSU resources:

- [ ] I got this!
- [ ] I understand most of it, but I’m still confused by ______________________________________
- [ ] I’m confused by most it and could use help from my advisor.

III. Exploration

**Action:** Use the “What If” function in MyDegrees to explore two other majors that interest you.

**Reflection:** Ask yourself whether you are finding your course of study fulfilling and whether or not you’re excited by what is on horizon for your chosen pathway for the coming years.

**Reflection:** Take pause now and again and ask yourself questions like:
- [ ] If __________ is currently my Plan A in terms of a major(s), why?
- [ ] How does my major fit with my current interests and my skills?
- [ ] What skills might I need to continue to develop to be successful in my major?
- [ ] In the event things change, and I decide my Plan A that Plan A is not the best fit for me, what is my Plan B?

IV. Involvement outside the Classroom

**Action:** Look for ways in your first term to learn more about activities, clubs or organizations you might want to join.

**Action:** Prior to or during your first term, identify three educational experiences you want to pursue outside of the classroom?

1. 
2. 
3. 

**Reflection:** At the end of your first year, think about your activities that you got involved in outside the classroom.

- [ ] What did you like and why did you like it?
- [ ] Do you plan to continue with that activity?
- [ ] What involvement activities to you plan to get involved with in the coming years? What do you need to do to make those activities a reality?
What happens in the Advising Appointment each term?
Here is an overview of the types of topics and discussion points that may surface in your advising appointments during your first year.

**START Appointment**

This typically occurs at New Student Orientation (aka START) prior to your first term. The intent is to introduce you briefly to the OSU academic environment and some of the “tools and rules”

- You’ll get materials related to your college and major. These will likely include an explanation of how advising will work for you once school starts.
- Your interactions with your advisor may be in small groups or it may one-on-one, and the person you interact with at START may or may not be the advisor you meet with once you actually start to take classes.
- You’ll discuss the role of the Baccalaureate Core and how it intersects with course in your major or majors you are exploring.
- You may discuss prior experiences with college level coursework – AP, IB, or transfer credits from another institution.
- You’ll develop a first term schedule that potentially incorporates first-year skills courses, introductory courses in your major or any majors you’re exploring, and courses designed to help you with transition into OSU.
- You’ll learn how to use the registration system in OSU online services and get a brief introduction to how your college/major uses other online tools like MyDegrees and the MyOSU Portal.

**First Term Appointment**

Your face-to-face interaction with your advisor at this appointment will likely be longer than at START. Because this appointment should happen prior to your registration for the next term, the purpose of this appointment is both to examine current experiences and plan for future ones. Typically your major advisor will want to meet with you between weeks 4 and 8 of the term – it is best to initiate contact on the early end of that spectrum, so you can be assured to get in prior to your priority registration date. During this appointment, you may...

- Discuss your likes and dislikes relative to your courses and reflection on your learning thus far this term.
- Discuss campus or online resources that might support any academic or personal concerns/challenges you’ve faced in your first term.
- Revisit the degree components (Bacc Core, major requirements, etc.) and discuss the implications of that towards your second term course possibilities.
- Develop a list of potential second term courses (including any necessary First Year Skills Requirement courses) and get a registration pin.
- Review the “tools” – MyDegrees, MyOSU portal, Online Catalog and Schedule of Classes.
- Discuss co-curricular/experiential education participation- your advisor may have suggestions for out-of-classroom involvement related to interests (clubs, leadership opportunities, internships, research, study abroad, etc).
- Discuss the purpose, rationale, and process of evaluating instructors at the end of the term through the online evaluation (Student Evaluation of Teaching).
What happens in the Advising Appointment each term?
Here is an overview of the types of topics and discussion points that may surface in your advising appointments during your first year.

**Second Term Appointment**

Again, this appointment should happen between weeks 4-8, prior to your registration for your third term. Depending on your first term performance, your advisor may have already reached out to you before or just after the start of the term to debrief any concerns coming out your first term. During this appointment, you may...

- Discuss first term grades and current term academic performance thus far; **reflect** on your learning thus far this term.
- Discuss campus or online resources that might support any academic or personal concerns/challenges you’ve faced in your first two terms.
- Discuss major fit and exploration, and, if necessary, possible changes to your academic path; discuss changes or revisions to academic goals.
- Revisit co-curricular/experiential education involvement. Discussion on how you've started to supplement your classroom work with meaningful activities outside of the classroom, and how to move forward if you simply have ideas on furthering your involvement.
- Assure that you are on track to be compliant with the **First Year Skills Requirement** by the end of your third term.
- Develop a list of potential third term courses and get a registration pin.
- If your first term was fall term, your advisor may also bring up summer school (registration, scheduling, term deadlines, etc.).

**Third Term Appointment**

Again, this appointment should happen between weeks 4-8, prior to your registration for your fourth term. Depending on your second term performance, your advisor may have already reached out to you before or just after the start of the term to debrief any concerns coming out your second term. Some majors may transition you at this point to a departmental or faculty advisor. During this appointment, you may...

- Discuss first term grades and current term academic performance thus far; **reflect** on your learning thus far this term and this year.
- Discuss campus or online resources that might support any academic or personal concerns/challenges you’ve faced in your first year.
- Discuss major fit and exploration, and, if necessary, possible changes to your academic path; discuss changes or revisions to academic goals.
- Depending on your major, you may start to preview decisions, deadlines, or opportunities that are relevant to your major.
- Develop a list of potential fourth term courses aligned with where you need to go next with requirements and/or your exploration and get a registration pin.
- If your first term was fall term, your advisor may dialogue with you about summer plans and discuss things you can do over the break to further your exploration and/or prepare yourself for your second year.
Important! Remember OSU’s Learning Goals for Graduates

When you come through START, you’re introduced to OSU’s overarching goals for all undergraduates: The Learning Goals for Graduates (LGG’s). Regardless of your major, these are aspirational outcomes for you as you make your way towards your undergraduate degree. These are the type of big picture, transferable skills that potential employers, graduate schools, and professional schools are seeking from OSU undergraduates. At the end of your first year, it is good to stop and think about how your first year experiences contributed to these LGG’s. Here are the LGG’s and two questions that you can ask yourself as you reflect on each one.

Competency and Knowledge in Multiple Fields:
- Have you taken any courses outside of the areas you thought you’d study this year?
- What new ideas and concepts have you come across this year that you want to explore more?

Critical Thinking:
- What have you had to prove in your courses this year and how have you done that?
- What has been a problem or issue you’ve come across this year that has required a creative solution? How did you come to that solution?

Pluralism and Cultural Legacies:
- What experiences have you had or things have you learned this year that have challenged you to think outside of the background/experiences from which you come?
- How do you see your life experiences aligning or contrasting the experiences of people from other cultures?

Collaboration:
- What have you worked on accomplishing with the help of others this year?
- What did you learn about yourself that you did not know before regarding working with other people towards a common goal?

Social Responsibility and Sustainability:
- How does what you hope to do during and after college align with your personal values?
- How have you given back to a community or how do you plan to give back?

Communication:
- What information have you had to understand for the sake of presenting it to other people, either verbally or in writing?
- Have there been particular situations, circumstances, or audiences that have provided a challenge to presenting your thoughts, opinions, and/or research?

Self-Awareness and Life-Long Learning:
- Have you learned something about yourself or about learning this year that you did not know previously?
- In what ways do you hope to continue to grow in the next few years at OSU and after graduation and how do you plan to accomplish that growth?