First Year Students – Frequently Asked Questions

What is academic advising?

Academic advising is a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and advisor. The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary.

When should I meet with my advisor?

- For all mandatory meetings (pre-advising, course selection advising, success plans).
- When you have questions about your course choices, academic options, and/or career goals.
- If you are interested in study abroad.
- If you have questions about academic policies.
- When you are concerned about your progress in one or more courses.
- If you receive a COMPASS referral from an instructor.
- If you receive one or more unsatisfactory mid-semester evaluations.
- If you feel overwhelmed or stressed with any aspect of college life.
- When you have a question and don't know who to ask.
- When your advisor asks you to!

What is proper appointment etiquette for meetings with my advisor?

- Arrive promptly for your appointment.
- Come prepared with a list of topics/questions you want to address.
- During course selection advising bring your tentative list of class choices.
- Bring paper and a pen to take notes.
- Knock on the door, even if it is open, to ask if your advisor is ready for you.
- If there is someone else in the office, wait in the reception area for your advisor to come out and get you.
- Turn off your cell phone before you walk into your advisor's office.

How many credits can I take each semester?

To complete degree requirements in four years, full-time undergraduates normally carry a course load of between sixteen to eighteen credit hours per semester. For the purposes of financial aid, on-campus housing, and eligibility for the Dean’s List, a course load of twelve credit hours per semester is considered full-time. During his or her first semester at Wheelock College, a student may enroll in courses totaling no more than eighteen credit hours. Thereafter, except during a semester when he or she is enrolled in a practicum, a student may enroll in courses totaling no more than twenty credit hours. During a semester in which a student is enrolled in a practicum, he or she may enroll in courses totaling no more than sixteen credit hours unless he or she has received prior approval from the Scholastic Review Board. To obtain such approval, a student must complete and submit to the Scholastic Review Board a Request to Overload form.

What are my graduation/program requirements?

Every undergraduate student, regardless of academic program, must:
- Fulfill the General Education requirements
- Complete all sections of the WLCE
- Complete a minimum of 134 credits
Earn a cumulative grade-point average of at least 2.0
Complete a major (from the Arts and Sciences or Social Work, or Juvenile Justice). In addition, students may complete a professional program and/or minors.

Program sheets outlining specific requirements for each academic program are on MyWheelock.

Students can monitor their academic progress online by using the ‘Program Requirements/Process’ section on the Portal. It is the student’s sole responsibility to ensure that he or she satisfactorily completes the courses and requirements necessary for degree completion.

When do I need to declare my major?

Students must declare their major by the second semester of sophomore year. Students will attend a Major Exploration Program during their first year to learn more about potential majors and explore their options at Wheelock. New first year students are given the opportunity to declare programs in the spring of their first year. Transfer students can declare their programs at Transfer Advising Day in June. A new student declares his/her major by completing an Undergraduate Declaration of Academic Program(s) form and returning it to Academic Advising on the first floor of ACW.

What is the role of the student with Academic Advising?

- Schedule regular appointments.
- Be on time for your scheduled appointments and come prepared.
- Accept responsibility for your decisions.
- Be open to developing and clarifying your personal values and goals.
- Be knowledgeable about college programs, policies, and procedures.
- Keep a record of your academic progress and goals.
- Be an active learner by participating fully in the advising experience.
- Gather all relevant decision-making information.
- Activate your email account and check your email regularly (at least once a day).
- Familiarize yourself with the academic calendar and be aware of deadline dates.
- Seek help when needed and use appropriate campus resources.

What is the role of my advisor?

- Understand college requirements and effectively communicate them to you.
- Provide a safe place where you can share your thoughts, aspirations, concerns, and interests.
- Provide resources, referrals, and strategies for using available resources on campus.
- Listen carefully to your questions, concerns, and confusions.
- Encourage and support you as you gain the skills and knowledge necessary for success.
- Assist you in making course and major decisions.
- Assist you in understanding the purpose and goals of higher education.
- Be accessible to you during posted office hours, by telephone, email, or web.

How do I know when my advisor is available?

Advisors should have their office hours posted on their office door or outside of their office. If you are meeting with a professional academic advisor you can also access their office hours on My Compass and searching their availability.
How do I make an appointment to meet with my advisor?

If you are meeting with a professional academic advisor, then you can schedule an appointment on My Compass.

If you are meeting with a faculty advisor, then you should email or speak with the advisor and figure out a time when you are both available to meet.

I already know what I want to major in; do I have to meet with an advisor?

Yes. While many new students come to Wheelock with an idea of what they want to major in, the advisor-advisee relationship is about more than choosing a major. The College’s developmental and holistic approach to advising allows students to have an advisor who is a mentor and source of support for them throughout their college experience. Your advisor will help you with a variety of processes, including, but not limited to, major selection.

What is an academic map?

Academic maps can be made as soon as students declare their academic program(s) and this choice must be made by the second semester of the sophomore year.

The process of making a map of your plan for your academic program involves identifying all the specific courses you still need to take to complete requirements in all areas of the curriculum, identifying whether and how many "general elective" courses you need to fulfill the "total credits needed for graduation" requirement, and plotting these on a semester-by-semester grid. Once created, the map becomes a working document for you and your advisor to use to select course choices each term, and to revise to accommodate changes in your plans and progress in your academic program.

Keep a copy of your academic map in your file of your academic program records, and bring it with you to advising conferences, course selection, registration, and any time you make a course change.

Remember that academic maps are dynamic, "working" documents and expect that they will be continuously revised for many reasons. For example, you may have a course to meet your physical science requirement listed on your map for next term, but cannot fit one in your schedule. So the physical science requirement needs to be moved to another semester and replaced by a course listed for a different term on the original map. An Academic Map is meant to be a guide. It will change as your ideas, educational, personal, and professional goals change. It is important that you use this map as a PLANNING TOOL only.

Where can I find out more about study abroad?

You should begin by talking with your academic advisor about your interest in studying abroad and seeing how it would work with your major(s). You will then be referred to the Center for International Programs and Partnerships to talk more specifically about the different study abroad programs.