

College Adviser – role description*

A Role purpose

Every graduate student at Oxford has a College Adviser, who is an academic member of his or her College, usually a Fellow.

The role of the College Adviser is additional and complementary to that provided in the student's department or faculty. The College Adviser is not expected to perform the role of the Department or Faculty Supervisor(s), or to be responsible for directing students' academic work. Rather, the intention is to provide a focal point for an individual student's relationship with the College, and general academic or pastoral advice and assistance throughout the student's course of study.

NOTE

Throughout this document the term 'College' includes Permanent Private Halls.

Please see Annexe A for more information about the recommendations included in the text below.

B Key aspects of the role

1. Induction and welcome

- Meet all full-time Advisees in first term of residence, as early as is feasible.
- Establish a basis for future contact, bearing in mind the role purpose and the 'College Advisee: guidance' (which is expected to be disseminated to graduates in arrival packs).

Recommendation 1 of the Conference of Colleges:

Each College should have an induction session (or sessions) to explain what range of academic, domestic, and pastoral/welfare support is available to graduate students in the College and the University and to encourage and facilitate social integration. Such session(s) should be in line with the agreed University timetable for graduate induction in faculties and departments.

Recommendation 2 of the Conference of Colleges:

Every student (including part-time students) should have a College Adviser, and the responsibilities and expectations of the Adviser and the Advisee should be clearly specified in order that both may understand what is expected of them. For all full-time students, the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should ensure that an initial meeting between the Adviser and the Advisee takes place during the graduate's first term of residence.

2. Advisee meetings and contact

- Offer the opportunity to all full-time PGT students to meet at least once a term.
- Offer other graduate students this opportunity at least once a year.
- Where meeting in person is not feasible, maintain email contact with advisees.
- Initiate contact directly or through the College Office, by, for example by sending an email, offering a date for Advisees to drop in, meet over lunch/dinner in Hall, at a seminar, a college event, college club/society, in the lab, or for drinks, etc.
- Encourage Advisees to make contact as and when they need advice or help, while also directing to other College Officers as necessary (for example, the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor, College Academic Administrator/Registrar, College Welfare Officer/Chaplain, etc).

Recommendation 3 of the Conference of Colleges:

Each student on a taught graduate course should have the opportunity of meeting with his/her Adviser at least once a term. Other graduate students should have opportunities for meeting their Advisers on a regular basis as needed; it is expected that this would be not less than once a year. On occasions when the Adviser is unable to meet the Advisee, the Adviser should at least send the Advisee an e-mail inquiring of his or her progress and offering to meet if the Advisee feels this would be important.

* Please note that this document is intended for use in mixed colleges. An alternative version for use in graduate colleges can be found in the [Key Documents](#) folder in the Graduate Committee section of the [Conference of Colleges website](#).

3. Progress monitoring

- Monitor advisees' progress, by reviewing and where appropriate discussing their University supervision reports,¹ and by being available for consultation, either in person or by email.
- Discuss with students any problems or difficulties they may be experiencing in their Department or Faculty and/or with their supervisor.
- As appropriate, comment positively on students' progress, and achievements: Advisers are not there only to monitor students' progress and pick up problems.
- Consult the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor if there are concerns about the student's academic progress and if a student appears to be experiencing difficulties with their academic work.
- Participate, as appropriate to the college's local circumstances, in annual progress reviews.

Recommendation 4 of the Conference of Colleges:

With the exception of the college named below, College Advisers should keep abreast of their Advisees' academic progress at regular intervals. Colleges should ensure that they have a process in place by which the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor or Academic Administrator is able to confirm at least once a term that Advisers are so doing.

(Exception: All Souls, given that all its members are Fellows of the College)

Recommendation 5 of the Conference of Colleges:

Each full-time student should have the opportunity to participate in an annual progress review where their academic progress is discussed and they may raise issues of concern to them. (The term 'annual progress review' is used to mean a meeting of a formal nature that takes place once each year, when a student has the opportunity to discuss his or her academic progress, and other issues, with an appropriate college officer.)

Recommendation 7 of the Conference of Colleges:

The Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should take appropriate action when problems regarding University academic provision are identified by Advisers, flagged on GSS, or raised by other means. This may include meeting the student and/or Adviser, contacting the University Supervisor or department, or bringing issues raised to the attention of a College committee or University authorities. Problems relating to departmental teaching provision should be raised with the departmental or faculty Graduate Studies Committee. Records should be kept of actions taken in response to problems, and of any communications to University departments/faculties or other offices.

4. Problem-solving, advice and pastoral support

- Offer advice (where and if possible) on academic-related matters such as applications for research funding, conferences and seminar attendance, publication and career plans.^{2,3}
- Provide pastoral support, including on health, financial, personal or coping issues, and direct students to appropriate persons/services for assistance.
- Refer students, as necessary, to the appropriate College/University resources.⁴

Recommendation 6 of the Conference of Colleges:

Each College should make available to its graduate students the opportunity to raise a sensitive issue (whether pertaining to university or college matters) confidentially with a senior member of the College, and graduate students should be notified clearly of how to avail themselves of this opportunity.

¹ [Graduate Supervision System; OxCORT](#) (for BCL, MJur).

² Further information on resources for students can be found at the [Student Gateway; Careers Service](#); [\[Insert url for your own College's landing page for College/PG financial support\]](#).

³ College Advisers would not normally be expected to provide academic references, as others are better placed to do so. They might provide a reference for other purposes, such as Junior Deanship, or a character reference.

⁴ [\[Insert url for your own College's landing page for welfare/support resources\]](#); [University Health & Welfare Services](#).

For inclusion in arrival packs

College Advisee: guidance

All students are assigned a College Adviser, who is usually a Fellow of the College.

Your College Adviser can:

- provide pastoral support, for example on health, personal or coping issues, and/or direct you to appropriate persons for assistance;
- monitor your progress, by discussing your University supervision reports and by being available for consultation, either in person or by email;
- discuss with you any problems or difficulties you may be experiencing in your Department or Faculty, and/or with your supervisor;
- consult the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor if there are concerns about your academic progress and if you appear to be experiencing difficulties with your academic work;
- offer guidance on sources of support available within the College and University.

In addition your College Adviser may be able to offer you advice on academic-related matters such as: applications for research funding, conferences and seminar attendance, publication and career plans.⁵

Your College Adviser is *not* expected to perform the role of your Department or Faculty Supervisor(s), and is not responsible for directing your academic work or for giving detailed academic guidance.

You will first meet your College Adviser during your first term, and you are encouraged to contact your College Adviser as and when you need advice or help. (You should also feel free to consult other College officers as necessary: see below.)

Your College Adviser may be changed during periods of sabbatical or other academic leave. Should there be reasons for you to seek a change of Adviser, you should contact your Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor.

Further information

This guidance focuses specifically on the role of your College Adviser. Your College Adviser will be able to direct you to relevant sources of advice and support, which you should feel free to consult as necessary. These might include (but are not limited to):

- College Chaplain or Welfare Fellow
- MCR President or MCR Welfare Officers
- College Nurse or GP
- College Counsellor
- College Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor or Academic Administrator
- College/Tutorial Office or equivalent
- College Bursary or equivalent
- Financial Aid/Student Hardship Officer

⁵ College Advisers would not normally be expected to provide academic references, as others are better placed to do so. They might provide a reference for other purposes, such as Junior Deanship, or a character reference.

ANNEXE A – Recommendations of Conference of Colleges:

Colleges are asked every year to report on their graduate (and undergraduate) academic provision against a series of recommendations. These recommendations (set out in full below) are considered on an annual basis by the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (of Graduate Committee and the Senior Tutors' Committee) and then endorsed on annual basis by Graduate Committee and the STC, and on a three-yearly cycle by Conference.

(Recommendations 1-7 are cited in the College Adviser Role Description above, but are repeated here so that the full set of recommendations can be viewed in one place and separately disseminated as needed)

1. Each College should have an induction session (or sessions) to explain what range of academic, domestic, and pastoral/welfare support is available to graduate students in the College and the University and to encourage and facilitate social integration. Such session(s) should be in line with the agreed University timetable for graduate induction in faculties and departments.
2. Every student (including part-time students) should have a College Adviser, and the responsibilities and expectations of the Adviser and the Advisee should be clearly specified in order that both may understand what is expected of them. For all full-time students, the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should ensure that an initial meeting between the Adviser and the Advisee takes place during the graduate's first term of residence.
3. Each student on a taught graduate course should have the opportunity of meeting with his/her Adviser at least once a term. Other graduate students should have opportunities for meeting their Advisers on a regular basis as needed; it is expected that this would be not less than once a year. On occasions when the Adviser is unable to meet the advisee, the Adviser should at least send the Advisee an email inquiring of his or her progress and offering to meet if the Advisee feels this would be important.
4. College Advisers should keep abreast of their Advisees' academic progress at regular intervals. Colleges should ensure that they have a process in place by which the Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor or Academic Administrator is able to confirm at least once a term that Advisers are so doing.
5. Each full-time student should have the opportunity to participate in an annual progress review where their academic progress is discussed and they may raise issues of concern to them. (The term 'annual progress review' is used to mean a meeting of a formal nature that takes place once each year, when a student has the opportunity to discuss his or her academic progress, and other issues, with an appropriate college officer).
6. Each College should make available to its graduate students the opportunity to raise a sensitive issue (whether pertaining to university or college matters) confidentially with a senior member of the College, and graduate students should be notified clearly of how to avail themselves of this opportunity.
7. The Tutor for Graduates/Senior Tutor should take appropriate action when problems regarding University academic provision are identified by Advisers, flagged on GSS, or raised by other means. This may include meeting the student and/or Adviser, contacting the University Supervisor or department, or bringing issues raised to the attention of a College committee or University authorities. Problems relating to departmental teaching provision should be raised with the departmental or faculty Graduate Studies Committee. Records should be kept of actions taken in response to problems, and of any communications to University departments/faculties or other offices.
8. With the exception of the College named below (All Souls), there should be a formal mechanism within each College for graduate students to give feedback on College provision. Student feedback should be reviewed and acted upon via the appropriate channels, which may include College committees when issues of general significance arise. Colleges should report back to students, or to a representative of the student body, that action has been taken in response to feedback received, giving details if appropriate.
9. In line with the recommendation previously agreed by the Conference of Colleges in Michaelmas 2008, graduate students should be represented on College Governing Bodies and other relevant committees.
10. Every College should keep full records of its graduate students, to include (i) reports from College Advisers and University Supervisors; (ii) details of the course being taken or completed, marks achieved, thesis topic, current status, funding sources and financial guarantees, etc. The records should include details of actions taken in response to problems.