

IoD Academic Advising Student Handbook

2023-24

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Introduction

Purpose of handbook

This handbook is intended as a reference for students in the Institute of Dentistry (IoD) so they are aware of how academic advising is intended to work.

The handbook will provide Institute-specific information relating to academic advising and links to QMUL and other resources for further information.

The handbook cannot provide comprehensive guidance to cover all aspects of advising, so please do contact the various staff mentioned here for help at any time. (See [Roles and Responsibilities](#) section).

Goals of academic advising in the IoD

Academic advising is a fundamental part of the role of academics within Schools to provide general academic guidance and personal support to several identified students (advisees).

The goals of academic advising in the IoD are to:

- Be a **point of contact** for all issues identified by advisees, regardless of the nature or complexity of any given issue (though students may access the Student Support Office and other support services across QMUL directly too).
- Be able to **support / assist advisees with any Level 1 issues**, be they of an academic or non-academic / pastoral nature (see definition of Level 1 issues below).
- **Signpost the student** to help them identify and navigate the most appropriate source of further help should an issue emerge as Level 2 or Level 3 and require knowledge or expertise that it would be unreasonable to expect of the Advisor.
- **Facilitate two timetabled group reflection sessions per year to ensure all students can undertake reflective practice.** Advisors will meet with their group of students for approximately 1-1.5 hours and encourage them to reflect on their learning, challenges, and goals.

Level 1 issues are **straightforward issues for which the Advisor can provide effective support** either by (i) **simply listening** or by **helping the student to identify and explore potential solutions**.

Level 2 issues are **more complex issues** for which **specialist** knowledge and/or skills are required to support the student.

Level 3 issues are **very complex issues** for which **expert** knowledge and/or skills are required to support the student.

Complexity of Issue	Nature of Issue	
	Academic	Non-Academic / Pastoral
Level 1	Advisor	Advisor
Level 2	Senior or Programme Tutor ⁴	SSO (or equivalent)
Level 3	Academic Registry & Council Secretariat (ARCS)	Central Professional Services e.g. Advice & Counselling, DDS, Finance or Immigration

Academic support can be defined as supporting the student to attain academic success and achieve the desired qualification.

Pastoral / non-academic support is supporting the student on a more personal level to address any difficulties that they might experience in life that have an impact on their studies.

Informing students of advisor details

Students will be informed of their Academic Advisor details at the beginning of the academic year. There will be a period when this occurs in years other than the first year as the new process roles out. In due course, students will be informed in their first year and remain with the same advisor unless they change group / year or the advisor changes.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Academic Advising programme is overseen by:

- The Director for Taught Programmes (at the time of writing, John Buchanan).
- The Teaching, Learning and Innovation Centre Lead (at the time of writing, Amitha Ranauta).
- The Academic Lead for Student Support (at the time of writing, Dominic Hurst).

Director for Taught Programmes

The Director for Taught Programmes will ensure proper oversight of the Academic Advising Programme. They will liaise with Centre Leads to support respective staff to fulfil their Academic Advising responsibilities.

Teaching, Learning and Innovation Centre Lead

An innovative aspect of the Academic Advising programme at the IoD is the facilitation of group reflective sessions for advisees.

The responsibility for training advisors and advisees and monitoring quality of the reflective sessions sits with the Teaching, Learning and Innovation Centre Lead.

Student Support Office (SSO)

The SSO administers the Academic Advising system for undergraduates in the IoD and is responsible for:

- Recruiting and supporting academic advisors
- Organising and signposting advisors to relevant pastoral support and academic skills training

- Organising advisor and advisee groupings
- Informing students of the role of academic advising
- Monitoring the quality of the programme
- Managing referrals from academic advisors
- Managing complaints about the programme

The SSO has an Academic Lead for Student Support and Student Support Manager (at the time of writing, Dominic Hurst and Becky Hunter respectively).

Education Manager

The Education Manager (at the time of writing, William Ng) will timetable sessions for academic advisors to meet with their advisees once per term so that there is ample time to meet with students in an unhurried way.

Academic Advisors

The roles that an academic advisor is expected to fulfil include:

Roles for Academic Advisors in the IoD	
Academic	Pastoral / non-academic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate two timetabled group reflection sessions per year, in which advisors meet with their group of students for approximately 1-1.5 hours and encourage them to reflect on their learning, challenges, and goals. • Offer to meet with each student individually two to four times per year to offer personalized feedback, advice, and support on their academic progress and wellbeing. We anticipate two of these could follow the reflective sessions. Some students may not wish to take advantage of this. • Signposting to module or year leads about academic concerns they are unable to assist with. • Signposting to the academic skills team at QMUL for one-to-one and group support and online resources. • Signposting to SSO and online resources for motor skills support. • Providing references, if requested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial emotional support using active listening skills and then signposting to SSO, advice and counselling or external services (e.g., in extremis, the Samaritans). • Initial support for sexual assault and harassment and signposting. • Initial discussions about specific learning differences (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD, dyspraxia) and signposting to SSO or DDS for screening. • Initial discussions about disabilities and signposting to SSO or DDS. • Listening and responding appropriately to concerns about others' behaviour, including other staff. • Escalation of safeguarding concerns (e.g., of children or child siblings of students) with the SSO or with the FMD and QMUL safeguarding leads.

Roles for Academic Advisors in the IoD	
Academic	Pastoral / non-academic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial career discussions and signposting to colleagues in the IoD or externally. Initial discussions about intercalating (BDS students only). 	

Advisees

Students will be expected to attend the timetabled group reflective sessions.

One-to-one meetings will be offered but if students do not wish to take these offers up, they do not need to. The intention is that they can seek initial advice and support for academic and pastoral concerns if they wish to.

Policies and Procedures

Frequency and duration of advising sessions.

There will be two timetabled group reflective sessions per year. Each will last up to 1.5 hours.

It is anticipated that following the two group reflective sessions, students could be offered time to meet individually with their Academic Advisor.

Academic Advisors will meet ad-hoc with students within the boundaries of their working hours. It is not expected that advisors use lunch breaks to meet with students and the IoD positively discourages meetings out of hours.

Meetings should take place on college or dental hospital grounds, or on Teams, only.

Communication

Communication between advisors and advisees should only be via QMUL systems e.g., email, Teams.

The IoD has explicitly said that social media platforms and personal telephone numbers should not be used.

Advisors and advisees should respect each other's time and allow for delays in responding. The academic advisor is not an emergency support. Students have access to the SSO in the IoD and welfare services at QMUL during working hours.

The SSO advises that academic advisors do not respond to students out of hours and to maintain healthy boundaries. Emails or other communications can be forwarded to the SSO to deal with if there is urgency.

Boundaries

It is very important that there are clear boundaries between advisors and advisees. This is to protect the well-being of each, as well as avoiding the potential for accusations of inappropriate contact or behaviour.

The IoD explicitly requests that all advisors:

- Only meet with students in person or online between 08:00 and 18:00.
- Only meet one-to-one with students in university buildings.
- Do not organize social gatherings between advisors and advisees. If advisees arrange a gathering and invite an advisor, this would be acceptable.
- Only use university email and Teams to communicate.
- Avoid creating or joining social media groups that include students.
- Remember that they are not counsellors and avoid becoming too heavily involved in students' personal problems. In these cases, Advisors are expected to refer either to the Student Support Office or to the Advice and Counselling Service.

Advisors and advisees should read the guidance on boundaries from the Advisor Hub:

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/student-advice-and-signposting-hub/being-an-advisor/boundaries/>

Professionalism

Concerns may be raised by colleagues about a student's professionalism e.g., poor timekeeping.

Academic Advisors are supportive and should not get involved in punitive action against their advisees in these circumstances. The role of the Advisor is to encourage a student to explore how they might address the concerns and to reach out to, for example, the year lead and / or the SSO.

Confidentiality

Advisors are offering advisees support, where they can reasonably expect that what they tell the Advisor will be handled sensitively, and only shared where there is a need to do so.

Consent can be sought from the advisee to share information, for example, with the SSO.

However, **advisors are not permitted to maintain confidentiality if there is a significant and immediate risk to the advisee's health and safety or that of others.**

Advisors and advisees should read the guidance on confidentiality from the Student Advising and Signposting Hub:

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/student-advice-and-signposting-hub/being-an-advisor/confidentiality/>

Referral and escalation

Academic issues

Academic advisors who feel that an academic issue an advisee brings to them is beyond "level 1", should contact or refer the student to the most appropriate colleague.

Curriculum matters (e.g., timetabling, course delivery & content)

- Education Manager: William Ng
- Year leads:
 - BSc
 - BSc1: Baldeesh Chana (interim).
 - BSc2: Sarah Redwood (assessment); Baldeesh Chana (timetabling).
 - BSc3: Jack De Ste Croix.
 - BDS
 - BDS1: Saroash Shahid.
 - BDS2: Mark Payne.
 - BDS3: Amani Agha (maternity leave from October 2023); Radhika Desai (maternity cover)
 - BDS4: John O'Donnell.
 - BDS5: Roy Woodhoo.
 - BDS4 or BDS5 Dental Foundation Training (DFT) queries: Stephen Denny.

Assessments

- IoD Assessment Lead: Swati Nehete.
- Exams and Assessment Manager: Ryan Salucideen.

Programme level

- BSc: Ruxandra Moraru.
- BDS Undergraduate Directors (also with BSc oversight): Paul Ryan and Sinclair Butcher.
- Director of Taught Programmes (with BDS and BSc oversight): John Buchanan.

Non-academic / pastoral issues

Academic advisors who feel that a non-academic issue an advisee brings to them is beyond “level 1”, should initially contact or refer to:

- The IoD SSO: dental.sso@qmul.ac.uk
- Welfare (counselling, finance, housing): <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/welfare/> .
- Report and Support (bullying, harassment, assault): <https://reportandsupport.qmul.ac.uk/> .
- Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor(s) (sexual assault and harassment): <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/welfare/sexual-harassment-advice/>
- Disability and Dyslexia Service (long term mental or physical health conditions, specific learning differences / neurodiversity e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, autism): dds@qmul.ac.uk

QM has a guide for staff and students to support students in urgent situations here:

http://www.dds.qmul.ac.uk/media/disability-and-dyslexia-service-/documents/Pub9975-Student-in-Distress_v1_1.pdf . This guide will help staff and other students respond to students who:

- Are thinking about suicide or acting on suicidal thoughts.
- Are experiencing psychosis (experiencing / believing things that others do not).

- Are at immediate risk of serious harm (e.g. overdose, self-harm, risk of harm from someone else).
- Tell you about someone else who is at immediate risk of serious harm.
- Have recently experienced sexual violence.
- Have recently experienced other types of violence.

If possible, please let the SSO know about what has happened either at the time or as soon as practical afterwards. (dental.sso@qmul.ac.uk).

There are also options for students in a mental health crisis to contact external organisations out of hours here: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/welfare/help-in-a-crisis/> .

Evaluation and feedback

Advisors and advisees are encouraged to feedback to the SSO directly at any point. They can do this by emailing dental.sso@qmul.ac.uk.

The SSO will evaluate the programme annually through surveys and focus groups and report to the Dental Education Committee.

If advisors or advisees wish to raise a concern about an advisor or advisee, they should do so in confidence to the SSO who will meet to discuss this at the earliest possibility and determine subsequent actions.

Resources and support

Training

Reflective Practice Facilitation training

In-person training is in place for all Academic Advisors to learn how to facilitate the two reflective practice sessions each year. It is expected that all Academic Advisors will attend training before facilitating a session.

Non-Academic / Pastoral support training

The SSO will oversee the running of or signposting to courses relevant to the pastoral elements of the role. These will include:

- Responding to disclosures of sexual harassment and assault
- Responding to disclosures of bullying and harassment
- Active listening without judgement
- Supporting students with specific learning differences (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autistic spectrum disorder – ASD).
- Suicide awareness

Student Advising and Signposting Hub

Students may wish to explore the resources their Advisors also have access to on the Student Advice and Signposting Hub.

STUDY ABOUT RESEARCH  

Student Advice and Signposting Hub

[Directory of contacts](#) | [Students in Crisis](#) | [Being an Advisor](#) | [Academic Support](#) | [Mental health and wellbeing](#) | [Practical Problems](#) | [Development and Careers](#) | [More +](#)

This Hub includes information on providing general academic guidance and personal support to Queen Mary students. It is designed for academics and other staff in student facing roles within Schools, Institutes and Professional Services.



<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/student-advice-and-signposting-hub/>

Academic support services

Students struggling with academic issues such as studying, writing, or presenting can be signposted to the Academic Skills team within the library services.

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills/>

Students who need help with searching for evidence and academic referencing can contact the FMD's liaison librarian, Paula Funnell directly. p.a.funnell@qmul.ac.uk

Welfare support services

The Advice and Counselling Service (ACS) provides a range of confidential, specialist services to help students with financial, immigration and practical matters, and to support them with their mental health and wellbeing.

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/welfare/>

<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/welfare/wellbeing-support/>

When signposting to this service, with the student's consent, please let the student support office know so that they are aware.

Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS)

DDS staff offer advice, guidance, and support in the following areas:

- Finding out if students have a specific learning difference like dyslexia.
- Applying for funding through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).
- Arranging DSA assessments of need.
- Examination Access Arrangements (e.g., additional time).
- Accessing loaned equipment (e.g., digital recorders).
- Specialist one-to-one "study skills" tuition.
- Ensuring access to course materials in alternative formats (e.g., Braille).
- Providing non-specialist support workers (e.g., note-takers, readers, library assistants).
- Mentoring support for students with mental health difficulties and conditions on the autistic spectrum.

<https://dds.qmul.ac.uk/dyslexia/>

When signposting to this service, with the student's consent, Advisors are requested to let the student support office know so that they are aware (dental.sso@qmul.ac.uk).