
Role of Advisor

❖ Advising Responsibilities

As an advisor your primary role is to provide academic advice, which includes developing program plans, advising students on transfer credit requests, assisting students in the preparation of necessary forms, discussing prerequisites and how they can best be met and generally sharing your wisdom and experience in academic matters.

To perform your role effectively, you need to:

- Be familiar with all current university policies and practices, as well as with the academic programs for which you advise.
- Be available to students during scheduled advising times and at reasonable hours by telephone.
- Respond to student inquiries in a timely manner.
- Be familiar with current graduation deadlines and bring them to the attention of students who are close to graduation.
- Process required paperwork completely, accurately and promptly.
- Keep records of significant contacts with students and staff.

To avoid common advising pitfalls, you should adhere to the following:

- Do not promise a student a specific graduation date.
- Do not guarantee acceptance of transfer credit.
- Do not guarantee the awarding of prior learning credit.
- Do not guarantee a program plan until it has been approved by the MSA director.

Because of their close contact with students, advisors also often talk informally with students about career choices and opportunities, provide letters of recommendation, and indirectly market the program via meetings with prospective students. CMU's Off-Campus Career Services office offers a variety of eRecruiting services which students can register for at www.cel.cmich.edu/careerservices.

❖ **Advising Tools and Resources**

The academic information you need can be found in *CMU's Off-Campus Programs Bulletin* and in this advising handbook. You need to be familiar with both of these publications, and to remember that students may be governed simultaneously by several different editions of the bulletin. Administrative policies are drawn from the bulletin in effect when the student was admitted. Each student's academic program is governed by the bulletin in force on the day the student was admitted as a non-degree student or by a subsequent bulletin, if the student chooses.

The *CMU's Off-Campus Programs Bulletin* contains procedural and administrative practices that differ from on-campus practices. It is carefully reviewed to ensure conformity in policy with the *Graduate Bulletin*. Should a policy conflict occur, the on-campus *Graduate Bulletin* governs.

❖ **Resource People**

Program Administrators

Program administrators coordinate and schedule advising appointments for students and can provide you with information about your students. Program administrators are involved in the recruitment of new students and the initial orientation of students to the program. They also are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program center. You will work most closely with the program administrators.

Master of Science in Administration Director

The Master of Science in Administration director has primary academic responsibility for advising on the MSA degree program and performs the following duties:

- Oversees and approves advisors
- Provides advisor training
- Monitors and evaluates advisor performance

As an advisor, you are directly responsible on academic issues to the MSA director or his designee who will resolve any questions you have regarding academic issues pertaining to advising.

❖ Advising Appointments (Contracted Advisors)

Students should consult with their academic advisor as soon as possible after they have been admitted, and preferably before taking their first course. The program administrator will work with you to schedule advising appointments at the program center.

❖ Student Records and Advising Records

You should keep records of your significant contacts with students and staff. Copies of all notes and correspondence to, from, and regarding students should be dated and placed in the student's program center file. The *Advisor Site Visit Report* is the Off-Campus Programs form that you should use. This form is available on CMU's Off-Campus Programs Web site at the following address: www.cel.cmich.edu/faculty/procedures-forms/forms.html.

A student's official records are located on campus in CMU's Off-Campus Programs Center Services office. Your records and those maintained at the program center are considered "unofficial" records, although they are very important for your use in serving students.

The university has very specific policies and procedures regarding access to and release of information in student files.

You should not release any information about students without first consulting with your program administrator. Generally, only “directory information” may be released, but even that is restricted if the student has informed the program administrator that it is not to be released. Directory information includes:

- 1) Name
- 2) Address
- 3) Telephone number
- 4) Date and place of birth
- 5) Major field of study
- 6) Dates of attendance at CMU
- 7) CMU degree(s) and awards
- 8) Previous education institution(s) attended

You may not discuss any issue relating to a student with anyone other than the student or an employee of the university. The restriction extends to the student’s family members, roommates, business associates, etc.

Copies of the university’s “Policies and Procedures Concerning the Custody of Student Educational Records” and “Family Educational Rights and Privacy; Final Regulations” are available from your program center, and you should consult them.

❖ **Freedom of Information Act**

It is the university’s understanding that all CMU student records maintained by academic advisors fall under the category of a “public record” as defined by the Michigan Freedom of Information Act and are subject to the provisions of the act.

Call the Director, Enrollment Management or Associate Directors, Student Services, if a student formally (in writing) requests information under the Freedom of Information Act of Michigan, any other state, or federal statute.

❖ **Off-Campus Library Services**

Central Michigan University's Off-Campus Library Services offers services tailored to meet the needs of its students taking classes away from campus. Full-time librarians located on campus in Mount Pleasant, and in regional offices around the country, assist students in fulfilling their library and information needs. Additionally, a support staff on the main campus provides document delivery services to students when they request specific books, journal articles, or documents.

Off-campus librarians answer reference questions; assist students using online resources; direct students to specific print and electronic indexes and other reference sources; refer students to professional associations and government agencies; visit classes to publicize OCLS' services; and provide instruction in research techniques.

Students may obtain copies of specific periodical articles or borrow books from the Central Michigan University Libraries' collection. Students in the United States, Canada, Mexico and other international sites request materials and obtain services by:

- 1) Using a toll-free number, (800) 274-3838 (in Mexico: 001-800-544-1452)
- 2) Using a toll-free FAX number, (877) 329-6257
- 3) Using an e-mail address, oclibsvc@cmich.edu (for article requests) and oclsref@cmich.edu (for reference requests); or
- 4) Through the World Wide Web, <http://ocls.cmich.edu>.

Requests for books and journal articles are processed within 24-48 hours and whenever possible delivered to students electronically. If the items needed cannot be supplied from the campus collection, a loan from another library may also be requested.

Students can access the Libraries' electronic collections electronically via the Off-Campus Library Services Web site

<http://ocls.cmich.edu>. CMU also offers an online catalog of book and periodical holdings called CENTRA II. Over 120 additional online subject databases may be searched from Find Articles link. Selected databases offer full-text online retrieval capability in selected databases.

Students are responsible for the cost of postage, to return any books borrowed and accrued overdue fines for late returns. To avoid paying overdue fines, students should renew books by telephone.

As an academic advisor, OCLS reference assistance and document delivery services are available to you as well.

For more information on Off-Campus Library Services, please call the toll-free library number, (800) 274-3838 and ask to speak with a reference librarian.

❖ **Financial Aid**

Financial aid issues are very complicated and frequently change. When students inquire about financial aid, you should refer their questions to the program administrator. Students may also call 1-800-950-1144, ext. 1260, 3782, or 1086 or consult www.cel.cmich.edu/financial-aid/default.html for more information.

❖ **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Students are responsible for meeting the university's degree requirements described in the bulletin in effect on the date they receive non-degree admission. Students have the option of choosing subsequent bulletins, but usually they cannot choose to meet graduation requirements from more than one bulletin. (See "Developing a Program Plan" for more information.) They are responsible for complying with the procedures, requirements, regulations and deadlines printed in all the current bulletins. A detailed explanation of student responsibilities is included in the university's "Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Disciplinary Procedures" Appendix I, *CMU's Off-Campus Programs Bulletin*. Students are also expected to comply with

the university's "Policy on Academic Integrity for Off-Campus Students" Appendix II, *CMU's Off-Campus Programs Bulletin*.

Regular attendance is expected of all students. Students who anticipate any absence should consult with the instructor before they decide to register for the class. Where possible, Off-Campus Programs instructors will try to make arrangements for makeup work, where the absence is minor and unavoidable. If it becomes clear after registration that there will be a significant absence from class, the student should withdraw from the course.

❖ **Students Who Move**

Sometimes students move before their degrees are completed. There are several options available to them:

- If a student relocates near another of our program centers, the program administrator can forward the student's record to the new center, and a new advisor will be assigned.
- If students are not near a program center, and they have completed 21 hours of CMU credit, which includes no prior learning or graduate transfer credit, it may be possible to finish the degree either by using transfer credit from another institution, or by the use of a combination of transfer credit and prior learning credit. In such cases, students often retain their original advisors, and should be instructed to get specific pre-approval of courses they wish to transfer into the program from the MSA director before taking the courses. Students may also be referred to one of the centralized advisors for assistance. Online courses and, where appropriate, individual tutorials may also be used to complete the student's program.
- Students may find it necessary to transfer their CMU credits to another institution and complete their degrees there. Academic advisors should work with them to help facilitate the transfer.

❖ **Advisor Compensation (Contracted Advisors)**

Your expenses and compensation are generally handled by either your program administrator or the designated Off-Campus Programs staff person. He/she will provide you with detailed, current information on how rates are set and how expenses are handled. If you have questions or problems, they are the first people you should contact.

❖ **Advisor Review**

As part of their training, new advisors are assigned to work with experienced ones. The new advisor's training performance is evaluated closely before issuing a contract allowing her or him to advise alone.

Campus Center Services staff monitor each advisor's work to identify deviations from university policy and practice.

Feedback on problems is shared with the advisor and others as appropriate. Recurring problems are referred to the MSA director for additional action.

The MSA director reviews and approves program plans for all MSA students before they are allowed to graduate. While academic advisors make recommendations regarding graduate transfer credit, waivers, seven-year rule extensions, and student program plans, **final** approval rests with the MSA director and the College of Graduate Studies.